SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY
C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 534. FOR WEEK ENDING MARCH 25TH, 1899. [ONE PENNY.

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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 534. ONE PENNY.

For the Week ending March 25th, 1899.

A CUBAN TRAGEDY.

ONE evening three or four years ago, when Cuba was seething with bad blood, and the insurgents were working up to the last act of the tragedy that terminated in the defeat of Spain by America, the mail steamer *Washington* was slowly passing Morro Castle, through the narrow opening which leads to the Bay of Havanna, with the hills of Guanabacoa on the one side, and the beautiful city on the other, behind which rise palm-groves and luxurious tropical gardens where stand the many-tinted villas of the suburbs Cerro, Quemados, and Marianao.

One of the first to come on board the liner from the multifarious boats that swarmed out to meet her was Nita Gonzalez, a handsome young Creole who had come to welcome her American friend, Dulcie Faulkner. They had met at a French school, and Nita had paid two or three long visits to New York, but this was Dulcie's first sight of her friend's lovely home.

When their mutually affectionate greetings had been somewhat demonstratively exchanged, Dulcie was joined by her brother Geoffry, a tall, fair man of five-and-twenty, who had been accosted by a sallow, saturnine Cuban some five years his senior.

"She's prettier than ever, isn't she, Geoff?" said Dulcie, as her brother clasped her friend's hand warmly.

"That would be impossible, for she was always perfect," replied Faulkner, with a look of undisguised admiration and a tender pressure of the hand he still held.

"You seem to have developed new accomplishments—flattery, for instance. The last time I saw you, football and teasing were more in your line," replied Nita, laughing.

"Oh, I'm getting civilised, I assure you, and trust to you to complete my education," he replied, with a meaning glance at the seductive Spanish eyes of the girl beside him.

"We must be getting off," said Nita quickly. "The carriage is waiting near the custom-house, and if you'll give your papers to our man, Juan, he will see to the luggage, and we can drive straight home. Father is so sorry he cannot be back till late to-night."

"Dulcie will be delighted to accept your hospitality, but, unfortunately, I am detained in the city on business, so I've taken rooms at the hotel near the office. However, I shall hope to see you to-morrow evening at the latest," said Geoffry.

The last part of his speech drove away the cloud that had gathered on Nita's brow at his refusal to join them, and with an eloquent look from her lustrous dark eyes, she watched him rejoin his Cuban acquaintance.

After a few minutes' conversation he came back to the two girls, and, touching his sister on the arm, said quietly:

"There goes our friend Don Philippo Juarez, the gentleman I have come to tackle. He's as smooth-tongued a villain as ever robbed a fellow-creature, I'll wager."

The girls looked in the direction he indicated, and Nita remarked nervously;

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"I hate and distrust that man. He looks capable of anything. Father could not rest till one of you had come to see into things."

Don Alfonzo Gonzalez was the acting head of a firm in Cuba of which Geoffry D. Faulkner, senior, was the financial chief, and certain grave discrepancies in the department over which Juarez presided had caused the urgent message to New York in answer to which young Faulkner had come to Cuba in person.

The next morning Don Philippo Juarez appeared at the hotel to pay his respects to the millionaire's son, and his courtly dignity contrasted oddly enough with the free and easy, sharp business manners of the New Yorker. A casual observer might well have reversed the positions of employer and employed, so lofty was the air with which the Cuban comported himself.

"How in the world do you dress in this stifling, hot-house climate of yours?" asked Geoffry, who was lounging in a rocking-chair, sipping iced drinks, and wearing only a fine silk shirt and white trousers, such as he had worn during the latter part of the voyage. "Can I go out in these things?"

"Perfectly. All you need is a light jacket. We try to combine comfort with elegance," replied the Cuban, looking down complacently at his own spick and span white suit, which accentuated his dark, forbidding face.

"Bring me my coat and kamarband, Tom!" called Faulkner to his black servant.

The boy came in from the adjoining room with a white coat and an armful of silk scarves.

"Those are a little too bright for the daylight," said the American, tossing over some red and yellow Oriental sashes, till at last, with a smile, he selected a blue and white one, saying:

"These are my football club colours. Neat and elegant. Eh?"

The Cuban had been watching him with languid indifference till he saw him take up the blue and white scarf, then a satanic smile flitted over his face, and he answered courteously:

"Nothing could be in better taste or more appropriate."

In a few seconds Faulkner's toilet was completed with coat, tie, and kamarband, and Tom followed his master down the magnificent hotel staircase to the carriage in which the Cuban had arrived. As they passed through the hall, Tom noticed several people turn to look after Mr. Faulkner, and one or two men made whispered comments to each other, but he could not hear what they said.

That evening Don Alfonzo drove with Dulcie and his daughter to El Parquecito, where they had arranged to meet Geoffry, and the two girls were waiting in the carriage under the windows of the American club while their cavalier went in search of him.

The band was playing a Spanish dance, and the gaily-dressed throng gathered out of three continents had awakened to life and pleasure after the paralysing heat of the day. It was Dulcie's first glimpse of tropical life, and she was enjoying it with all the vivacity and lively interest of her enthusiastic temperament.

Nita, on the other hand, was silent; the scene had no new charm for her since the one she was hoping to see had not made his appearance.

All at once there came over the crowd one of those sudden transitions of feeling common to hot-blooded nations and individuals alike. Above the polyglot murmur of society talk rose angry voices and threatening cries, and a stampede was made for one of the entrances.

"What's the matter?" asked Dulcie, open-eyed.

"Sancta Maria! It's an insurgent! They will tear him to pieces!" cried Nita, who understood the angry cries around them.

"Oh! lynch law, I suppose? But I thought they kept to the hills. What's he doing in this select assembly?" replied Dulcie.

At that moment she saw a man drop from the balcony of the American club and dash into the crowd, clearing his way with his muscular arms, before which the clattering, gesticulating folk dispersed like smoke.

"That's an Englishman, from the way he uses his fists," said Dulcie, getting up on the seat to have a better view of the fray, and watch the stalwart Briton's progress.

"Nita, it's just splendid to see him! He's got through, and—Oh! The brute!" she cried, stamping her foot, and putting her hand before her eyes.

Dulcie's last epithet did not apply to the Englishman, but to a tall, powerful negro, whom she saw raise a long knife and bring it down upon someone in the midst of the crowd.

In a few minutes Don Alfonzo came hurrying to the carriage in great agitation and whispered something to his daughter, which made her turn ashen grey and clutch at the rail for support.

"What has happened, Don Alfonzo? I am so excited. And can't you find Geoffry? What is all this uproar about?" asked Dulcie, in her quick, disjointed way.

"There has been a mistake—an accident. I am terribly distressed. Mr. Faulkner—has—been——" stammered Don Alfonzo.

"It wasn't Geoffry I saw—stabbed—there! Tell me at once!" cried the girl, seizing his hand.

But before Don Alfonzo could answer, the crowd parted to permit the Englishman and two friends of the Gonzalez, who were carrying the unconscious form of the young American, to pass into the Club.

Geoffry's white shirt was torn and blood-stained, and only a shred of the blue and white kamarband hung from his waist. The tie had entirely disappeared in the scuffle.

When his wound was attended to, it was found not to be so dangerous as at first feared, but it was judged unsafe to move him from the club, where Dulcie and a nursing sister from the convent of St. Salvador were ensconsed for the night in charge of the patient.

Tom was wandering restlessly about the hotel waiting for his master with a dark sense of foreboding in his mind. He could not explain it to himself, but something was going to happen, he was sure of that. About eleven o'clock he saw two of the men who had stared so hard at his master that morning come and sit down in the American bar.

"There ought to be the dickens of a row about that stabbing affair in the gardens to-night! But how could he be such a fool!" said one.

"He wouldn't know he was wearing the insurgents' colours. He only landed last night, and I don't suppose he gave it a thought," said the other.

"Possibly not, but Juarez might have given him a hint. They went out together, you know, this morning."

"Juarez may have seen in it a way out of his difficulties. Young Faulkner had come to look into things, I'm told, and Don Philippo has been robbing the firm for years. He's a cunning scoundrel."

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Tom waited to hear no more. He must go to his master, whom he loved with the dog-like fidelity of his race. He darted out into the street, threading his way through the passers-by, pausing to listen wherever he thought to gain information. By degrees he gleaned the outlines of the story—how his master had gone to El Parquecito wearing the insurgents' colours, blue and white, and had been quickly surrounded by an angry crowd of Spaniards, who were only too glad to catch an American openly fermenting sedition.

While the excited parley was going on, a huge negro had worked his way up behind young Faulkner, and had plunged a knife into his back; but the timely interference of an Englishman had turned the blow aside and thus prevented the wound from being fatal.

Tom stole into the club and looked at his master. Dulcie promised he should have his share in the nursing later on, but at present she wanted him to fetch some of her brother's things from the hotel. As soon as he had done this, Tom started off on an errand of his own, having previously armed himself with a bowie-knife.

He took up his position outside Don Philippo's house and waited till near dawn. Then appeared the tall, burly form of the negro, with an ugly wound on his forehead from the Englishman's knuckles. He went up to the door and was admitted after giving a peculiar whistle. Tom stole in behind him and followed him to the room in which Juarez was sitting, concealing himself behind a gauze curtain.

The nigger gave his report, evidently believing he had killed his victim, and as Juarez was paying out the price of blood he said to himself:

"Then I'm safe!"

The last word had barely passed his lips when Tom's knife descended with unerring precision and he fell forward, pierced through the heart.

The negro caught up a revolver from the table and fired after Tom's retreating figure. The bullet entered his side and the report roused a general hue and cry, under cover of which the negro made off with his plunder, while Tom, regardless of his wound, ran for his life.

A couple of hours later Dulcie was summoned from her brother's room to speak to Captain Clarence Paulet, and as she went out to the verandah she noticed something covered with a sheet on the floor.

She found herself face to face with Geoffry's rescuer, who explained in a few words, that, having come to inquire of the porter as to her brother's condition he had seen a dark figure crawl to the door of the sick-room. Knowing that the city was in an uproar, he had feared mischief, but had found the poor fellow was dying from loss of blood, and with his last breath he had gasped: "Juarez kill .... master; Tom killed him."

Dulcie went to look at the faithful creature, and then turned to the Englishman with glistening eyes:

"It was just splendid of you last night! You saved Geoff's life by that dash of yours. I saw you start, only I little knew *who* you were in such a hurry about."

"Well, I came here because I knew there were likely to be some rows going on. A Britisher loves a fight, only he likes to see it squarely done. I'm only sorry I hadn't time to brain that brute of a nigger, but he made off while I picked your brother up."

"Yes. You're a *man*," said Dulcie, in her quaint, quick way, holding out both her hands to him.

As he took them in his firm grasp he made the mental comment:

"And you're a lovely, winsome woman!" which sentiment probably was communicated by the expressive glance from his dark grey eyes, for Dulcie flushed prettily, and said something about going back to her brother.

The news of Don Philippo Juarez's murder caused little further excitement and no regret. He was the sort of man everyone expected would come to a violent end, and much more important events were cropping up every day to divert public attention from such trifles.

As soon as Geoffry was able to be moved he was taken out to Don Alfonzo's villa at Cerro, where Nita joyfully took her share in nursing him back to health and vigour.

Captain Paulet, who was enjoying a year's leave from his regiment in Barbadoes, "to see the fun," as he put it, was a frequent visitor during Geoffry's convalescence, and Nita grew a trifle jealous, till it dawned upon her that his interest was by no means wholly centred in the invalid. Having made this discovery, she had no scruple in furthering the happiness of others as well as her own; so that when Geoffry D. Faulkner, senior, arrived in Cuba, he found both his children awaiting his paternal matrimonial blessing.

The double wedding took place a few months later in New York, and Dulcie looks back on her visit to Cuba with mixed feelings of horror and happiness. As time goes on the latter sentiment becomes more and more in the ascendant.

Mary Fermor.

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THE STRANGE DISAPPEARANCE OF CLARICE BURNABY.

CHAPTER I.

I Agree to Play Detective.

"Nigel Nugent," my Uncle James said solemnly, "all your money is lost!"

"Are you joking?" I demanded.

"Joking!" he said indignantly. "Is it a subject for joking? Yesterday you were heir to at least a couple of thousand a year—to-day you are penniless!"

I saw he was in earnest.

I asked: "How did it happen?"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Speculation," he said concisely. "I meant to double your fortune, my boy, but I was foolish enough to put all my eggs into one basket, and they're smashed. I'm sorry, but it can't be helped."

Well! I thought this was pretty cool, but there wasn't any good in crying over it. So I asked him:

"What do you suggest my doing?"

"I have already found you a berth," he said, "in a shipping office, where, if you work hard, you'll be making a tidy sum in a few years' time."

I only caught the end of his sentence as I left the room.

I was most bitterly disappointed; I had been brought up in comparative luxury, and had certainly never dreamt that I should ever have to earn my bread. But that was the least important part of the matter. What troubled me most was that I must renounce for ever what had been, since my boyhood's days, the dream of my life—to be an artist!

To me "life" spelt "art," and when the door of that shipping office clanged behind me, and I surveyed the piles of books and the rows of desks my heart sank within me.

I left my uncle James's house, and took lodgings. I did not quarrel with him, but I believe he knew that I thought he had behaved abominably, and that, therefore, I could never be quite on the old friendly terms again.

I worked steadily for two weary years. One day was painfully like another, and I vaguely wondered whether I was turning into a machine. I supposed that I was destined to spend my life chained to my desk and my high stool; but in this I was mistaken.

I went home one evening very tired. On opening the door of my lodgings I was met by my landlady, who informed me that my cousin, Miss Devereux, was waiting to see me upstairs, and then retreated into her back-kitchen.

I was simply amazed by this information. The Devereux were very grand people, indeed. True, old Lord Devereux and my father had been first cousins; but then I had never seen him or his children, and our lives had been passed in different spheres. I went slowly upstairs.

The landlady had lit my lamp. It had a big shade of rose-coloured silk, and under its soft glow sat a pleasant-faced, fair-haired girl, who started up and came forward when she saw me.

"You are cousin Nigel Nugent, aren't you?" she asked.

"Yes," I said, "I am." And then I paused, and stood waiting, feeling ridiculously shy.

She laughed suddenly.

"I'm so glad you're big," she said, "and you look like a person who would carry out what you undertook." I was six foot two.

"Thank you," I said soberly, "I dare say I should, but so far my 'undertakings' have been confined to an office stool and ledgers."

"How dreadful!" she said sympathetically. "But you must give up your office *pro. tem.*, we have something else for you to do—if you will only do it. It was quite my own idea, coming to see you about it. I got the address from Uncle James. You see, we are all in most terrible trouble, for Clarice Burnaby, my father's ward, has disappeared."

"What?" I said.

"It is quite true," she assured me, shaking her head sorrowfully. "Only next week she comes of age, and we were all going down to Burnaby Hall, which she owns, you know, and on her twenty-first birthday she was to succeed to £12,000 a year and that lovely old place."

"All this sounds very extraordinary," I said quietly. "But my dear cousin Amy, what can I do?"

"Do! Why find her!" she cried. "You will want money; you shall have it! You will probably have to employ detectives, to travel; in fact, you may and will want it for a hundred current expenses. But before we go into all that, tell me, will you undertake the task? Father simply can't. He is laid up with a very bad attack of gout in his eyes. Bernard is in India with

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his regiment, and I—well I can't go running about all over the place alone—it's not done, though I do think it's very absurd—I suppose I ought not to be here to-day, but I brought Mrs. Hesketh, our housekeeper, with me; she is downstairs."

She paused.

"You say 'Clarice has disappeared.' I must have more than that to go upon."

"But, my dear cousin," she returned, "I can't *give* you more to go upon. All I can tell you is this: On Wednesday evening we dressed and dined as usual; after dinner Clarice sang and I played, as usual. We bade each other good-night, and—next morning she was nowhere to be found. Her bed had not been slept in; a thick dress and fur cloak and cap were missing from her wardrobe, also all her jewels."

"That rather looks as if she had gone of her own free will," I remarked.

"Nothing of the kind," my cousin said quite angrily. "Clarice behave like that! What an idea! But I forgot—you don't know her; if you did, you would understand how impossible such a notion is."

"Well, then, if she didn't go of her own free will, somebody made her go; and that somebody, you may be sure, had a very strong reason for taking such extraordinary measures. The thing would be to find out if there *was* any reason, and, if so, who would benefit!"

"How clever you are!" Amy Devereux cried.

I shook my head. "It's not cleverness," I said, "it's common-sense."

"We won't argue," she returned, "but—will you undertake to try and find her? I know," she added, suddenly dropping her light tone and speaking very gravely, "that we have not got the smallest claim on you; that we have never been cousinly nor friendly where you are concerned, but there was a reason which you could not know of, and which *I* only learnt quite recently. Your father ran away with Miss Warner and married her, and she was the girl my father was engaged to! He never forgave him, and although you had done him no harm, he somehow felt backward about renewing his relations with people he had purposely ignored for years, yet now it is to you I have come. Why I thought of you I cannot tell. I think it must have been an inspiration!"

"It may have been," I said. "In any case I will do my best to find your beloved Clarice."

She stood up and held out her hand.

"I knew you would agree," she said confidently; "you have got such a good face. Will you come to-morrow to our house in Belgrave Square, and I will give you a large photograph of Clarice. In it she wears a particularly quaint necklace, which came from Persia, and which, I am positive, is the only one of its kind in Europe, so it might be a clue."

The upshot of this meeting was that I sent in my resignation and prepared to begin my search.

CHAPTER II.

I PRESENTED myself in Belgrave Square on the following afternoon.

Amy had expected me earlier, she informed me, as she proceeded to hand me some tea.

"I have not been idling," I told her, "for I have already seen a detective and arranged for him to help me in my task."

Amy clapped her hands.

"I'll fetch Clarice's photograph, and you can take a good look at it so that you may recognise her in the event of finding out her hiding-place."

She left the room and came back presently with a very large photograph in a frame, which she handed to me.

I looked at it with interest, which was suddenly turned to dismay—I had seen that lovely face before, and I was horrified to remember *where* I had seen it. It was in a prison van two days before!

"Great goodness!" I exclaimed. "Are you sure this is Clarice Burnaby?"

Amy Devereux stared at me.

"Are you mad?" she asked, "or do you imagine that I am? Or what?"

I apologised hastily, and told her why I was so upset.

She turned very white, but said determinedly: "Then it was through some mistake—Clarice is incapable of committing any crime!"

There was silence for a moment, then Amy said suddenly:

"I quite forgot to tell you that I received a mysterious note this morning—here it is."

She handed it to me and I read the following:

"Be at Lady Linley's dance to-night and you will see—what you will see."

That was all. It had been dropped (Amy told me) into the letter-box.

"It may lead to a clue," she said, "and, if you will take me, I'll go to Aunt Bella's dance. She wants me to be there particularly, I know."

To this I agreed, and, punctually at half-past ten, I appeared in Belgrave Square to find Amy and an elderly chaperon awaiting my arrival. I told my cousin I would not dance, but would look on, in case she wanted me for anything. I thought it was most unlikely that she would. However, I was mistaken.

She came up to me breathless with excitement in the middle of a dance.

"Nigel!" she whispered, "there is a girl here *who* is wearing Clarice's Persian necklace!"

I started.

"Really!" I said. "Where is she? You are sure you are not mistaken?"

"Of course I am sure!" she said sharply. "Look for yourself—here she comes."

I saw a tall, dark girl coming towards us, talking to a little man, who Amy informed me, was a rich Jew, to whom the girl, a Miss Lyon, was engaged.

I hesitated for a moment; then I went up to Lady Linley.

"Will you introduce me to Miss Lyon?" I asked her.

She assented at once, and we crossed the room to where the lady and her little *fiancé* were sitting.

After the introduction, I begged for a dance, which she gave me, and, when the time came, I easily persuaded her to sit it out.

She said she was only too pleased, as she was very tired.

I talked of all sorts of things at first, and then I ventured to admire her necklace.

"It is so very quaint!" I said. "Would you mind telling me where you got it?"

She laughed.

"That is easily told," she said. "You know I am engaged to Mr. Isaacs. Well, we were passing that old curiosity shop in Leader Street—the one at the corner—and, seeing this in the window as we passed, I stopped

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to look at it, and I admired it so much that Hermann went in there and then and bought it for me—gave a perfectly fabulous sum for it, too."

I thanked her for telling me, and we talked of other things; but I mentally resolved to pay a visit to that shop in Leader Street the very next day, and take Amy Devereux with me, so that she could recognise any other pieces of Clarice Burnaby's jewels which might be there.

I was getting more and more interested and excited in the work I had undertaken, and was hardly surprised to find the detective waiting for me when I got back to my rooms, somewhere in the small hours of the morning.

"I have got a clue," he said, "but, really, it throws light on so extraordinary a story that you will hardly credit it."

"I don't know about that," I said; "I have had a few shocks on my own account to-day."

I piled coals on the fire and hunted out a coffee-pot and etceteras; the detective, meanwhile, told me his story.

"I travelled down to Burnaby Hall this morning," he said, "and made my way to the village inn. There I heard one or two rather queer things about Burnaby Hall and its owners."

"First of all, did you ever hear that Miss Clarice Burnaby has a twin-sister?"

"No, never!" I answered. "But you know I am very ignorant on the subject."

"So I understood from what you told me. The twin-sisters were brought up in totally different ways. Old Mr. Burnaby, who must have been from 'mine host's' account the most erratic and disagreeable of men, took the most violent dislike to Miss Clarice's twin-sister, Valencia, and sent her away from home to be brought up by some distant relations who were extremely poor, and were the most disreputable set imaginable.

"In such a home, with such an upbringing, is it surprising that Miss Valencia should develop all the worst characteristics of her race? She grew up passionate, headstrong, cruel, overbearing, and, sooner or later, she was bound to come to grief!" He paused, and added impressively: "She is at this moment in prison, and will be tried for the murder of John Russell, the son of the woman with whom she lived."

I stood stock-still, and stared at him.

"Then it was Valencia, not Clarice, whom I saw enter the prison van?" I muttered.

"Of course it was!"

"It is too terrible!" I said.

I then told him about the necklace, and the corner shop in Leader Street. He listened attentively.

"That must be your affair," he told me when I had done, "and be sure you take Miss Devereux with you. I shall be there at three. I'll buy, or pretend to buy, something, but you must not know me."

CHAPTER III.

When Amy and I got out of our hansom at the corner of Leader Street, I saw at a glance that the detective was already there. He was asking the prices of some queer old miniatures, and never even turned round when we entered the shop.

"You had a Persian necklace in your window the other day," I said. "Have you got it still? I am anxious to buy it."

"Very sorry, sir, but I sold it yesterday to Mr. Isaacs; you may know the gentleman?"

The proprietor laughed gently. He was a very superior-looking man; I liked his face, and, as I have before mentioned, I don't think faces can lie.

I drew him aside.

"Look here," I said, "I have a special reason for asking about that necklace, and would be extremely obliged to you if you could tell me who sold it to *you* in the first instance, and what that person was like."

"I will do my best, sir," the man said frankly. "It was a lady whose name I don't know, at least, not for certain; but she had a very beautiful face—a face strangely like a young lady who has been pointed out to me when she was riding in the Row—they said she was a great heiress, and her name was Miss Clarice Burnaby."

I suppressed an exclamation, and the man went on:

"But it was *not* Miss Clarice Burnaby—of that I am sure. This lady had the expression of a she-devil."

"I have got a theory," I said later to the detective. "Supposing that Clarice knew about her twin-sister. Perhaps she may have found it out, though I am told that, when Valencia was first sent away, Clarice was told that she was dead. The extraordinary likeness between the two sisters would be proof enough for anybody; and, supposing Valencia, being in such trouble, made up her mind to appeal to Clarice, would not Clarice, in her nobleness of heart, go at once to her sister's help?

"Again, knowing that Valencia had incurred the full penalty of the law, would Clarice not take with her the means of providing Valencia with the wherewithal to leave England, or, at least to go into some safe hiding-place? Surely the surmise is only natural.

"Apparently Valencia sold the jewels given her by Clarice. What of that? It strengthens my theory.

"Now, I will tell you what I am going to do. Through Lord Devereux, who is an intimate friend of the Home Secretary's, I am going to get an order to see this wretched girl Valencia in prison, and persuade her to tell me where Clarice has hidden herself. That she is in hiding does not surprise me in the least. Can't you see for yourself what such a terrible disgrace befalling her own sister must mean? Can't you understand how her one idea is to fly from everybody she knows?"

The detective shook me warmly by the hand.

"I wish you belonged to us," he said, "you would make your fortune in a few years' time!"

I laughed and told him he would have to go down to Burnaby Hall and find out where the people lived who brought Valencia up.

"Bless you, sir, there is no need of that. You could have seen it in the papers—it's in every one that's had an account of the murder—and I've got it jotted down in my pocket-book. I'll copy it for you."

He did so, and I pocketed the slip of paper, then hurried away to interview Lord Devereux on the subject of the order which was to allow me to see Valencia in prison.

It took some little time. However, I got the order at last, and betook myself to the prison.

When I was face to face with her I became definitely aware of several startling facts. One of these was that the woman who sat there was the woman I loved—yes, loved even from her photograph—already with all my heart and soul. Secondly, that it was not Valencia, but her sister Clarice. Thirdly, that there had therefore been some hideous mistake, and that it must be rectified at once, and by me.

Then I spoke to the girl, who looked at me piteously,

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but whose tongue seemed tied. I asked her questions, but she would not, or could not, answer, and the prison authorities told me that she had maintained that stony, unapproachable, terrible silence ever since she had been brought there. I went away with a very heavy heart.

My next move was to find out the house where Valencia had been brought up, the house where she had committed that murder.

To explain *why* I thought, felt, *knew* that it was Clarice, not Valencia, who was in prison, would be simply impossible. But I was absolutely sure of it—surely, sometimes, a man may rely on his instinct.

I drove to the little suburban villa, where these relations lived.

It was an ugly little yellowish "stucco" building, unrelieved by one shrub, and it made me shudder. I rang the bell.

The door was opened by a tall, thin woman. She was dressed in a rusty black gown; she was distinctly untidy, yet I knew that she was a lady directly she spoke.

Her eyes were swollen, with weeping, I felt sure, and I apologised for disturbing her.

"But, when I tell you that I am anxiously trying to find Miss Burnaby, I am sure you will forgive me," I said.

"One Miss Burnaby has just killed my only son," she said, slowly and bitterly. "She is in prison, and will be hanged; she deserves it. The other—yes! I can tell you where the other is. She is in St. Paul's Hospital, two streets off, so I am told. I have not seen her. I hate the Burnabys root and branch; if it wasn't that the old man's money stood at one time between me and starvation, I should never have consented to take his daughter in. She grew up to be his living image. That her surroundings, the people she met here, our rough, wild life, helped to develop inherent vice—why should I deny it? I don't deny it, but I can't say I care. I am past caring for anything—my son is dead!"

With that she turned and shut the door, leaving me on the step.

Well, I thought, there is nothing for it but to go to this hospital, and find out what I can.

It was growing dark by this time, and I took a wrong turn, then another, and at last concluded I had best take a hansom home and return next morning to pursue my inquiries.

A gentleman was waiting to see me, my landlady told me. I supposed it was the detective, and wondered whether he could throw any more light on the subject of the affair. But it was a stranger who sat under my rose-shaded lamp—a tall, dark man whom I had certainly never seen before.

He went straight to his business.

"I have come," he said, "to speak to you about that shocking murder which took place in Noble Street last week."

I merely bowed, and he went on:

"I have a favour to ask of you—a great favour."

His voice broke suddenly, and I bent forward in my chair to hear what he would say next.

"Valencia Burnaby," he said slowly, as if each syllable was wrung from him, "was to have been my wife next week. You may say what you like about her; that has nothing to do with me. I loved her, and I believe that, once the wife of an honest man, she would have become a different woman. Now, the favour I want you to do me is this: Valencia is dying; she is in St. Paul's Hospital."

"Then it is Clarice who is in prison," I interrupted.

He bowed.

"By her own arrangement," he said, "she thought that, if she had herself arrested as 'Valencia Burnaby,' her sister would have time meanwhile to get safely out of England.

"She had thought of everything. Valencia, it appears, when she had quarrelled with and stabbed John Russell, had been alone in the house with him; his mother was away for a few days.

"When Valencia found that she had killed him, she was nearly beside herself. Then the idea occurred to her to go and throw herself on her sister's protection. She had only learnt that she *had* a sister a short time before.

"She went down to Burnaby Hall, and Clarice, seeing as it were, her own features reproduced, saw at once that what she said as to their relationship was true, and, having hidden her in her room during the evening to avoid suspicion, she herself took her to the station some miles off, and brought her up to town. Then she went to the house in Noble Street, let herself in by Valencia's latch-key, dispatched the former to a shop in Leader Street with a wonderful Persian necklace which she knew would fetch a large sum, and, the police having got word somehow that something was up, went and arrested Clarice, thinking she was Valencia, which was exactly what she wanted them to do.

"But Valencia could not carry out her part of the programme. She took the necklace to Leader Street, and sold it for a very large sum. Then, so she has told me, she suddenly realised what Clarice had done, and she hastened back to Noble Street, so as to be there when the police came. But, on her way there, she was knocked down by a van and mortally injured. The doctors at St Paul's say if she lives three days it will be a triumph of science.

"She has dictated a full account of everything, of the death of John Russell, of Clarice's heroic effort to save and shield her by going herself to prison—she has omitted no single detail. This account has been witnessed by two doctors at St. Paul's whom I know and trust; and this document I propose to hand over to you, but I want you to promise me that you will not make it public until she is dead."

The man's voice sank to a husky whisper, and I felt a lump rising uncomfortably in my throat.

He took out a paper; our eyes met.

"You promise?" he said.

"I promise."

My promise, I knew, meant three more days of prison for Clarice; and yet I was positive that, had Clarice's wishes been consulted, she would have begged me so to act.

As things turned out, the doctors were wrong in calculations, for within twenty-four hours after the stranger's visit Valencia Burnaby was dead.

Need I detail after events?

Constance Craigie Halkett.

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Dr. Greenberg's Scientific Murder.

TALL, gaunt, austere in face and manners, such was Arthur Greenberg, F.R.C.S., the great brain specialist and scientist.

Although a wealthy man, his house, though situated in Mayfair, was so plainly furnished as to appear almost barren. This fact his neighbours put down to his well-known eccentricity. Arthur Greenberg was also forty and unmarried; this, however, called for no comment, for it was almost common property that the great medico had been unfortunate in an *affaire d'amour*.

Strange though it seemed to the outside public, Arthur Greenberg had once loved passionately. I say once advisedly, for on receiving his dismissal he hid his chagrin beneath the cloak of austerity and none knew, save himself, how he still loved the girl who had trifled with him and hated the man who had won her.

For four years he waited patiently for an occasion to cry quits with Elmsley-Wilmot, then fickle Fate placed his enemy within his power.

Arthur Greenberg was seated alone in his dining-room eating his solitary dinner, when the butler brought in a card, bearing the superscription:

"Laurence Elmsley-Wilmot."

He glanced at the pasteboard, then said:

"Is Mr. Wilmot in the surgery?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did he state the nature of his business?"

The dark brow contracted.

"Mrs. Wilmot gave me the card, sir; there has been an accident——"

Greenberg rose hurriedly to his feet and, without waiting for the man-servant to finish his explanation, left the room and entered the surgery.

There were four people in the room besides Mrs. Wilmot: a policeman, a cabman, and a gentleman who had brough Wilmot to the house.

"Mrs. Wilmot, I believe," said Greenberg coldly bowing, a dull flush rising to his temples. "I hear that an accident has occurred."

"Knocked down by a cab, sir, and broke his head!" interjected the policeman.

"I am glad to have been so near at hand," said Greenberg professionally. "Will you kindly leave the surgery, please," he continued, approaching the operating couch, on which the injured man had been placed, and making a rapid inspection of his injuries. "This will require skilful handling, I assure you."

The order was promptly obeyed, with one exception.

Clarice Wilmot stayed behind, and closing the door, said entreatingly:

"Arthur."

"Yes?"

He turned sharply round to face her.

"You will save him, won't you? Do your best for the sake of old times—I love him so!"

The soft light which had stolen into his eyes faded as he heard her last sentence, and his pupils became suddenly dilated as he bent over a drawer and took out his instruments.

"I believe I remarked that I must have the surgery to myself, Mrs. Wilmot," he said. "I regret that I cannot make an exception to the rule which I have just laid down."

"I must not stay?"

"I regret you cannot."

He approached the patient and sponged the injured man's head.

"Arthur."

Once more she came towards him.

"Mrs. Wilmot, I must request you to leave the room; this is a very delicate case to treat, and I must be absolutely alone."

"You will do your best, won't you?" she cried entreatingly. "You won't let anything which has occurred in days gone by, prevent you——"

"I fail to understand you," Greenberg replied stiffly. "Will you kindly withdraw, Mrs. Wilmot."

His tone brooked no disobedience, and Mrs. Wilmot left the room.

As soon as alone, Greenberg bent over the unconscious man, deftly setting the cracked bone, sewing up the wound and bandaging the head, then he paused and sitting down at his desk glanced at the motionless figure.

"So she loves him," he mused vengefully. "Up to the present I deemed her a victim of circumstances, but now!"—he rose, and opening a drawer took from its

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recesses a fine needle, feeling its point with his thumb—"now I will revenge myself on her, on him!"

A savage light danced into his steel grey eyes, and his austere face became transformed by a fierce glow of exultation as he crept noiselessly across the thick carpet to the door, and bolted it without the least rasping sound being audible.

Then, walking to the couch, he bent over the motionless form, and taking a tiny phial of chloroform from his pocket, applied it to the nostrils of the prostrate man.

He then opened the windows to allow an exit to the suffocating fumes, then once more he bent over Wilmot.

"Some people, if they found out how you died, would say that you had been murdered," he whispered hoarsely, addressing the helpless man. "Murder, however, is a hard word to apply to just retribution, and I shall have the satisfaction of crying 'quits' to both you and your wife, without the fear of swinging for it. You will die in a few days, my friend, and your autopsy will reveal that you died from apoplexy."

He smiled complacently as he lifted the left eyelid of his victim and applied the point of the fine needle which he held to the lacrymal duct and forced the tiny steel barb upwards.

A moment later he had withdrawn it, tossed the needle carelessly in the drawer, and, wiping the tiny speck of blood away from the corner of his victim's eye, opened the surgery door and announced to Mrs. Wilmot who was anxiously pacing the lobby that her husband was on the high road towards recovery, and that he had better stay there for a few days.

Clarice Wilmot gratefully accepted the offer, and forthwith Wilmot was moved upstairs.

"I cannot thank you sufficiently for all that you have done," she said gratefully.

"I have only accomplished what any ordinary practitioner could have done," he replied calmly.

"True," she said thoughtfully. "But somehow, when —when they brought Lawrence here, I—I thought you would have refused your help."

"A doctor cannot refuse to lend his aid in an emergency. In the absence of Doctor Ailsay, my assistant, I attended your husband, madam."

Clarice Wilmot might have been the veriest stranger, to judge by the coldness of his voice.

"You will never forgive me, I think, Arthur," she remarked wistfully, after a pause.

"Your supposition is correct, Mrs. Wilmot," he replied stiffly. "Unfortunately I am so constituted that I never forget nor can I ever forgive an injury. I must now bid you good evening, as I have some work to do. Meanwhile," he added courteously, "pray consider this house as your own till your husband has recovered. I will give orders for Mr. Wilmot to be carried upstairs."

Then, without noticing her outstretched hand, he turned on his heel and entered the dining-room to finish his half completed meal.

Two days elapsed, then Wilmot succumbed to an apparent fit of apoplexy.

It was Greenberg who broke the news to Clarice.

"Your husband died of apoplexy," he explained briefly, when asked the cause of his death, "Doctor Ailsay has, however, the audacity to disagree with me on the cause of Mr. Wilmot's decease, and asks for an inquest, as he cannot thoroughly determine the nature of the fit which ended your husband's life. Of course, as he has been Mr. Wilmot's attending physician, I cannot oppose his desire. If, however, you are opposed to such a mode of procedure I will endeavour to deter him from his purpose."

"No," she replied listlessly. "Let him do as he likes. I—I should prefer an inquest."

Doctor Greenberg bowed.

"As you please," he replied, leaving her presence.

Two more days elapsed before the coroner's jury gave their decision as to the cause of Wilmot's decease.

"Death due to apoplexy," they declared after hearing the evidence, and Greenberg smiled triumphantly at Ailsay.

"I beg to differ with the verdict!" exclaimed a voice in staccato accents.

There was a buzz of excitement in the room on hearing the words, then all eyes were turned on Doctor Ailsay, who rose to his feet.

"I beg to differ with the verdict," he repeated.

Greenberg sneered openly, though a strange, unaccountable unrest oppressed him.

The Coroner's brows contracted as he asked:

"Indeed! Might I inquire what you consider the nature of his disease, then?"

"To a fit certainly akin to apoplexy—so much akin, indeed, as to be practically the same!" replied Ailsay in low, ringing tones.

A distinct sensation greeted the young doctor's words.

"And what is the name of this malady you speak of, sir?"

"It has no name," replied Ailsay evenly. "But whilst apoplexy is due to natural causes, the fit to which the unfortunate Mr. Wilmot succumbed is due to artificial causes, primarily."

The surprise felt by those who heard the young doctor's remarks became audible.

"Kindly continue, sir," said the Coroner. "And tell me what is your impression of the nature of the disease, as you appear to be so certain of having discovered it."

"To coin a name for the disease momentarily," said Ailsay grimly, "I will call it apoplexy Greenbergia."

Greenberg started violently, his austere face becoming even greyer than was its wont.

"You will notice," said Ailsay, crossing the room to where the dead man lay, "that the lachrymal duct"—he raised the left eyelid as he spoke—"is slightly distended. Can you explain why it should be so?"

The Coroner became interested; perhaps after all there was something in Ailsay's theory.

"With a microscope" (Ailsay took one from his pocket, and handed it to the Coroner), "you will note that at the orifice of the lachrymal duct there is a slight abrasion, and the entrance to the duct is bent slightly to one side. Am I not correct?"

"Perfectly," remarked the Coroner, examining the duct through the microscope; "but what has this to do with your theory?"

"It is the basis of it," replied the young doctor earnestly, "that abrasion is not the result of Nature or accident, it is the result of a pointed instrument being introduced, having for object the attainting of a capillary vein in the cerebral cavity——"

"Surely such a statement coming from you, Doctor Ailsay, is ridiculous," interjected Greenberg sarcastically. "I had imagined your studies in medicine had been more complete than they apparently have been, and I always have understood that the lachrymal ducts, far

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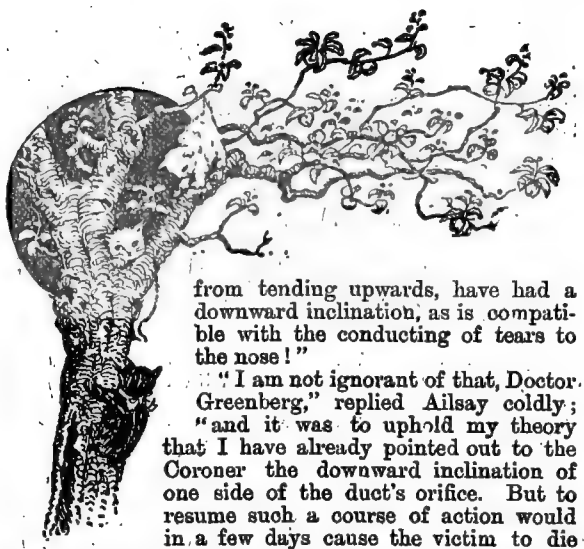

from tending upwards, have had a downward inclination, as is compatible with the conducting of tears to the nose!"

"I am not ignorant of that, Doctor Greenberg," replied Ailsay coldly; "and it was to uphold my theory that I have already pointed out to the Coroner the downward inclination of one side of the duct's orifice. But to resume such a course of action would in a few days cause the victim to die from effects hardly distinguishable from those produced by apoplexy."

"But, my dear sir," cried the Coroner alarmed, "such a course of action would be——?"

"Murder?—Precisely!—Scientific murder."

Greenberg shifted uneasily.

"Such a theory is absurd," he remarked. "And can only emanate from a diseased brain. The instrument is not invented which could pass through such a minute duct, without tearing it terribly."

"A needle could!" remarked Ailsay coldly. "A very fine needle, as you, Dr. Greenberg have often remarked to Doctors Wainwright, Edsley, and myself! You have just remarked that my theory is the emanation of a diseased brain, yet it has ever been a favourite subject of yours."

Greenberg paled visibly.

"You are labouring under a delusion, sir," he said painfully.

"Doctor Edsley and Doctor Wainwright will prove that I am not!"

"Then, sir," exclaimed the Coroner, "do you think that Mr. Wilmot has been murdered?"

"Emphatically! and I have the instrument which caused the gentleman's decease. It was found by Doctor Wainwright and by him given to me."

Once more his words caused a sensation.

"This needle"—he took a tiny roll of tissue paper from his waistcoat pocket and, undoing it, took a rusted needle from its centre—"was found by the desk in Doctor Greenberg's surgery."

Greenberg grew ashen-hued, and shivered as though with cold.

"And whom do you suppose is the murderer?" asked Greenberg, with a brilliant assumption of carelessness.

"Yourself, Doctor Greenberg," he answered coldly.

Greenberg reeled, then laughed wildly.

"Why not yourself?" he asked harshly. "You attended him."

"Not till he became conscious," replied Ailsay coldly. "Mr. Wilmot complained much about the pain he suffered in his eye. Doctor Wainwright was with me when I returned from my round, to your house, and you gave Mr. Wilmot in my charge. Together we examined the eye and came to the conclusion that you had tried the experiment that you had so often said was infallible. Do you forget that Doctor Wainwright asked permission to go into your surgery for the loan of a scapel? I thought not! Well, sir, he returned with the scapel, and also with this needle!"

"You lie!" shouted Greenberg hoarsely. "This is a fiendish fabrication got up to ruin me. I accuse you of being the murderer, you liar! I had no motive to murder him."

"I imagine Mrs. Wilmot can supply us with a motive if required, at the Central Criminal Court," replied Ailsay drily.

"You lie!" shouted Greenberg, pallid with fear. "You lie!"

"Have him arrested," cried some of the jury.

The request stung Greenberg to madness, for with a hoarse cry of rage the murderer sprang at Ailsay, but the latter, expecting some such occurrence, was prepared, and sent him reeling to the ground from the effects of a well-planted blow between the eyes.

When he staggered to his feet he found himself in the grip of a constable, and left the room with handcuffs on his wrists.

As Ailsay had suggested, Mrs. Wilmot gave a very good motive for the crime at the trial, whilst Doctor Ailsay, Wainright, and Edsleys' evidence was brief and conclusive.

Doctor Arthur Greenberg did not, however, suffer the extreme penalty of the law, owing to the defence of his lawyer, who stuck gamely to his plea of the prisoner's irresponsibility of action.

Though he cheated the gallows, however, he did not escape incarceration for life in the Broadmoor Criminal Asylum.

Tristam K. Monck.

Result of the "Paragraph" Competition.

The best paragraph made up of odd lines out of *Short Stories*, dated February 25th, has been sent us by Mr. Alfred Sansom, of 56 Tudor Road, Hackney, N., and his five friends. A prize of £1 has been sent to each.

		Page.	Column.
A. Sansom, 56 Tudor Rd., Hackney, N.E.	As I gazed fascinated by the v r/ horror of the s c n,	226	2
A. M. Sansom, 56 Tudor Rd., Hackney, N.E.	both shots rang out as one, sharp and spiteful, on the	233	2
Jane Lewis, 2 Basing Place, Kingsland Rd.	sward.	232	2
Harriett Frary, 42 De Beauvoir Sq., Kingsland.	I sprang across the short distance that separated us;	235	2
Elizabeth Smith, 20 Waterloo St., Haggerston.	I saw Valette was regarding me closely as I raised	225	2
Lizzie Barfield, 50 Haggerston Rd., N.E.	the dying man, who was fast growing unconscious.	238	1

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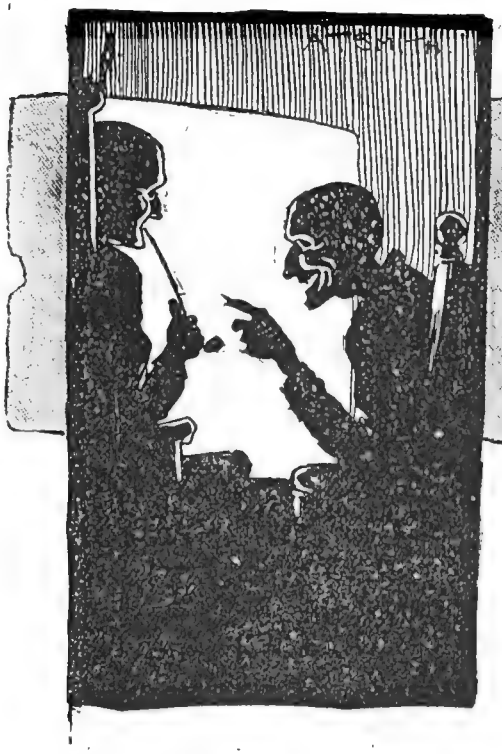

Perdita's Parent.

We were a travelling Shakesperian company, and Perdita our leading lady. She had only been on the stage a short while, but showed remarkable talent. All the men pronounced her a genius, the ladies were not unanimously of that opinion, but they admitted "she knew how to make the most of herself," whatever that ambiguous phrase might mean. She was adorably beautiful—that again was the male opinion—and aroused the latent chivalry in our natures to such an extent, that the other fayre dames pronounced us "positively ridiculous!"

We defended ourselves thus: Acting was an art, we said. As actors we were, therefore, artists. Art was the expression, of the perception of, and devotion to, the beautiful. Perdita and beauty were synonomous terms—argal, we were her devotees. I doubt if our syllogisms would have passed muster with a Jevons, but Love's logic is not exacting.

Perdita was reputed wealthy.

"My boy," said Miggs, our low comedian (at £2 10s. a week), who was always "in the know," "she draws five solid quidlets on her own every Saturday, week in, week out, independent of what she gets for mumming. I had it from Florizel, and you know how thick he is with the lady. I wonder she don't take out her own 'crowd' and star. I would!" And Miggs explained how it was possible to play any Shakesperian piece with a company of eight, provided they were *experienced* people, that is, people who could double or treble parts if required, without keeping the stage waiting.

Perdita's parent chaperoned her daughter.

Ah! yes, our fair Princess was guarded by her Dragon, an "Army and Navy Stores mamma," whose "late lamented" had been in one of the services. She had "views" for Perdita, and I suppose the stage had been selected as a happy medium for focussing them. Gas and limelight are powerful influences for attaining that end, as Debrett can show us.

Her daughter was rapidly acquiring fame in the provinces; in a few months her novitiate would be over. Then would come offers from great London managers a West-end *début*, cheers, triumphs, paragraphs, and the gorgeous, glittering, golden transformation scene to wind up the "opening" of life's pantomime at St. George's, Hanover Square. To the dragon, actors were, of course, quite impossible people.

However, she was not generally ungracious, and at times a certain grim humour would percolate through her granite formality.

On a journey she was a talking topographical dictionary, replete with the history of every estate we passed near, its revenues and encumbrances, including a biographical sketch of each landed proprietor, showing a piquant and intimate knowledge of each branch and twig of his family tree, their health, of decay, buds and blossoms.

Most of us were young and democratic, and scoffed at titles and territory, blue blood and Barons and the dragon, with staccato shake of the head peculiar to her, pronounced us "pert boys," to whom nothing and nobody were sacred—we looked at Perdita and forgave her.

Florizel was our leading man and stage manager. He had wavy auburn hair (Muggs swore he had once extracted a much advertised "curler" from the inside of his collar), large beseeching eyes with dark lashes (Muggs declared in a keen east wind Florizel shed black tears), and a musical voice.

He wasn't quite popular with the men, although we were not unfriendly. Truth to say, he was a somewhat inflated personage, and given to posing; but a simulated earnestness of manner and speech served to conceal his egotism, and carried the conviction to inexperienced and impressionable female natures that had lit the fire of poesy and passion, that they fancied they observed burning on his eloquent lips, or blazing through the windows of his soul.

We prided ourselves on being a rather superior company, intellectually and sartorially. We were wont to discuss the influence on English Dramatic Literature of certain Scandinavian and Belgian "Masters," and we declaimed against Melodrama with a wealth of invective

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calculated to make the fortunes of an Adelphi playwright.

Knickerbockers of wondrous patterns and startling stockings were in vogue amongst us; and our raiment generally was of that fantastic order dear to the fancy of modern theatrical youth.

Florizel never wore knickerbockers, but his garments were invariably *well built*. Made up, and dressed for Romeo, or Orlando, he certainly looked picturesque! Perdita certainly thought so, for his broad chest and shapely limbs pervaded the pages of her sketch book.

They were both devoted to their art, of that there could be no doubt. Hardly a morning passed but they found it necessary, after the general rehearsal, to run through some of their own scene together. But there was no avoiding the watchful eyes of the Dragon, for though she permitted these dramatic duties in the interests of her daughter's histrionic training, the proprieties were rigidly observed, and the Demon of scandal propitiated by her saving presence. She would sit in front nodding her grey head with keen appreciation of some well delivered line, or dubiously shaking it at a somewhat too impassioned embrace.

Rehearsal over, Perdita was marched off under her sole escort; for in the Dragon's eye this intimation was plainly to be read: "Out of business young men are warned off." One morning, however, Perdita arrived at rehearsal unaccompanied—the Dragon was temporally indisposed. There must have been many cuts in their usual concluding scenes, for a quarter of an hour after the company's dismissal, the pair were observed walking towards the river, away from the abode of the Dragon. Possibly Rosalind's relations with Orlando formed their engrossing topic of conversation, and deep in their Forest of Arden (where are no clocks) they wandered on.

Some two hours later, as they were returning hastily by the Market Square, Perdita gave a terrified little squeal, for there glaring at them from the opposite pavement stood the re-vivified Dragon. Retreat was useless, bold measures alone likely to avert humiliation and discomforture.

"Oh! mother, dear, so glad to see you're better. Mr. Florizel was kindly escorting me home. What's for lunch? I'm so hungry—been for such a long—er—rehearsal," gasped Perdita with fiery cheeks, and a miserable attempt at composure.

The Dragon thrice shook her horrid head, as if gathering all her available venom ere she struck, and then gasped:

"I have been sitting shivering in that detestable barn of a theatre one hour awaiting your pleasure. There is one cold, hard boiled egg for your luncheon. Perhaps Mr. Florizel will honour you further by sharing it; he deserves some reward for his conduct. Come!" The prospect of such an exhilarating banquet apparently had no charms for Florizel, for he bowed low, and meekly murmured a polite refusal.

Candour compels me to confess that we others secretly rejoiced at Florizel's discomforture. He had always been terribly conceited, but somehow since it had come to his knowledge that Perdita considered him "such a manly figure," he had become intolerable. We all agreed that he wasn't the right man for her (with individual mental reservations as to who was) and when a rumour got abroad that he was a married man, the cup of his iniquity was filled indeed, and we were of one mind that it was shameful of him to make love to our peerless leading lady, and that for the honour of the company it ought to be stopped.

Anyhow, the Dragon put her veto on the extra rehearsals, and the baffled Lothario had to make the most of his opportunities for dulcet whisperings and languishing glances whilst waiting in the wings and passages at night. The Dragon had scotched, but not killed the snake.

One evening, I was sitting by the green-room door awaiting my entrance, Florizel and Perdita, on the other side of the room, were as usual in earnest conversation, he bending over her in a graceful attitude, she looking smilingly up into his face. Presently the Dragon entered, quietly—she did not notice me—and they apparently were unconscious of her presence. She raised her lorgnettes and looked steadily at Florizel with a contracted brow, while I sat quietly awaiting developments.

Suddenly I saw her give a little start, and stare hard at Florizel's legs, and I nearly shrieked with delight when I observed that one of them showed an abnormal growth of calf very much out of its right position. The Dragon's head moved in the peculiar manner I have described, and with a grim smile she crossed over to them, and to my surprise took a seat and joined affably in the conversation, becoming apparently more earnest and interested.

My attention was in a moment again riveted by a most extraordinary proceeding on the Dragon's part. I saw her surreptitiously remove a long bonnet pin from her head, and with it deliberately prod Florizel in the leg—it might have been a wooden one, for he never winced. She repeated the operation on the fellow limb with no further result.

Then like a secret assassin she rose, and while continuing the conversation with great vivacity, stabbed him between the shoulders, Florizel was again profoundly unmoved.

The whole operation was executed with such skill and secrecy that Perdita saw nothing.

The next moment beginners were called, and Florizel, with a characteristic glance at himself in the pier glass, caught sight of his misplaced muscles. A look almost of terror came into his face as he swiftly readjusted them, giving a furtive glance at Perdita, who, all unconscious of the incident, hurried from the room. I followed Florizel, and left the Dragon moving her head more jerkedly than ever, while a peculiarly meaning smile played round the corners of her mouth.

Florizel and I shared a dressing-room, and the following evening while making up for my part in *As You Like It*, I noticed him diving into his dressing basket and scattering the contents with that systemless persistency peculiar to most exasperated losers of property.

After he had made a hurried tour of inspection round the room, including an uninvited visit to my basket, I ventured to ask if he had lost anything.

"Look here," he groaned, "which of you boys has been having a game with my pads?"

I assured him truthfully that I, at least, was guiltless.

"You had better ask Muggs, he's our practical joker," I added.

Muggs and the other members of the company were in turn catechised, and all earnestly protested their innocence.

"Half hour, please, gentlemen," shouted the call-boy, a minute later.

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And Florizel threw himself headlong into his basket for what proved another futile search.

"Well, the curtain shan't go up till they're found," he shouted, flinging himself savagely into a dressing-room chair, which promptly avenged this insult to its age and decrepitude by collapsing like the Deacon's Wonderful Shay—all at once—and depositing Florizel, minus his dignity, on the floor.

"Here, call-boy," he yelled, rushing to the top of the stairs, "send round to the front and tell Mr. Harland I want him at once."

But Mr. Harland, our business manager, had gone on to the next town, so Mr. Bowsett the local manager appeared, and the situation was explained to him.

Mr. Bowsett was sympathetic, and would make all enquiries, but in the meantime begged Florizel to go on with his dressing; there was a capital house, and the curtain must go up punctually at the advertised time.

Mr. Bowsett's inquiries proved fruitless. Florizel stormed, and I regret to add swore, and refused point-blank to go on. Then Mr. Bowsett waxed warm and argued the point with highly-coloured vehemence, throwing threats of damages for breach of contract, with all attendant pains and penalties, concluding his oration with a pathetic picture of a loyal public disappointed of one of their prime favourites, until finally by a mixture of threats and cajolery he induced Florizel to complete his incomplete toilet as the youngest son of old Sir Roland. "Oh what a falling off was there!" "Meagre were his looks." "His youthful hose well saved a world too wide for his shrunk shank." Shoulders that erstwhile were squarely set, now sloped away like the neck of a champagne bottle. He was a doleful Orlando that night, the audience greeted him with a titter, but, with the exception of a few pointed pleasantries from the gallery boys, were merciful.

At his first meeting with Rosalind before the wrestling scene, I saw Perdita give a startled puzzled look, and as she eyed him up and down it was with a peculiar emphasis she spoke the line: "Is yonder the man?" There was a world of feeling too in Orlando's delivery of: "My better parts are all thrown down, and that which he stands up is but a quintrain, a mere lifeless block," and a deep tragic note in: "O! poor Orlando, thou art overthrown!"

Overthrown he certainly was, for the Dragon had worked her will.

When he spoke to Perdita as they came off the scene she appeared to answer with an hysterical sob, or was it a girlish giggle? I certainly heard hearty laughter coming from her dressing room as I passed and distinctly caught the words:

"Padded sham. Oh! what a pair of spindle shanks!"

Florizel's pads reappeared the following night as mysteriously as they had vanished, but the spell was broken, and the idol smasher, the "salt estranging" sea of ridicule had washed out all the landmarks of her love.

Perdita soon after left us to the general regret to "star" with her own company, and I noticed that she inserted an advertisement in a prominent theatrical organ to the effect that she required a *robust* actor for her leading man.

LESLIE CROWN.

£1,000 PRIZE COUPON.

Further particulars respecting this Competition, which closes on Monday, April 17th, will be found on page 366.

S. S.

My estimate is { *Births* ..... / *Deaths* ..... } *Write in large Figures.*

Name .....

Address .....

Signatures of five people:

1. .....
2. .....
3. .....
4. .....
5. .....

*Newsagent or Bookstall Clerk** .....

* If a bookstall clerk, the name of the station will be sufficient.

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- A PRIZE OF -

£1,000 FOR A "S.S." READER.

£1,000 £1,000

£25 FOR A NEWSAGENT! £50 FOR WITNESSES!

- - MAKING A TOTAL OF £1,075! - -

THE BIGGEST PRIZE EVER OFFERED FOR SO SIMPLE A TASK.

For Coupon see page 365.

To win this substantial sum of money, all you have to do is to fill up the coupon on page 365, giving in the proper place the number of births and the number of deaths which will occur in the thirty-three great towns in the United Kingdom for the week ending April 22nd, 1889.

Then write down your name and address, and ask five of your friends to write their names and addresses in the spaces provided. Any coupon not bearing these names will be disqualified.

Also ask the newsagent or bookstall clerk, from whom you obtained this copy of "S.S." to insert his name and address in the space provided. Although such a course is obviously to his advantage, it is not compulsory for the coupon to bear his signature.

Witnesses, newsagents, and bookstall clerks may sign any number of coupons, and competitors may sign each other's as witnesses.

To the person whose attempt is correct we will pay the sum of **£1,000.**

To the newsagent or bookstall clerk whose name appears on the winning coupon we will pay the sum of **£25,** and **£5** to each of the boys attached to the bookstall from which the paper was bought.

To each of the witnesses whose names appear on the winning coupon we will pay the sum of **£10.**

If no competitor estimates the correct number of births and deaths, the £1,000 will be awarded to the individual whose forecast is most nearly correct.

In the event of two or more persons being correct, the £1,000 will be divided amongst them. This condition applies also to the £25 for the newsagent or bookstall clerk, the £5 for the boys, and £10 for each of the persons who sign the winning coupons.

One competitor may send in any number of attempts, but each coupon must be signed by five persons under the conditions mentioned above.

It must be clearly understood that all persons who enter for this competition must abide by the decision of the Editor in any question that may arise in connection with the competition.

As a guide to your estimate we give below the number of Births and Deaths which have taken place in the thirty-three largest towns in the United Kingdom for the corresponding period for the past three years.

The figures as published by the Registrar-General will be taken as correct. On December 2nd, 1898, a competition similar to this was declared legal by the Appeal Court.

Registered during the Week Ending April 25th, 1896.		Registered during the Week Ending April 24th, 1897.		Registered during the Week Ending April 23rd, 1898.	
Births.	Deaths.	Births.	Deaths.	Births.	Deaths.
6,783	4,062	6,226	3,965	7,202	3,905

All attempts to be addressed to the Editor, Short Stories, Henrietta Street, London, W.C., and the envelope to be marked in the left-hand corner with the word: "Births."

THE COMPETITION CLOSES ON MONDAY, APRIL 17th.

THIS PRIZE IS OFFERED IN CONJUNCTION WITH "PEARSON'S WEEKLY," "HOME NOTES," "M. A. P." "SUNDAY READER," "BIG BUDGET," "PICK-ME-UP," AND "PASTIMES."

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A WEDDING TOMBSTONE.

An American Home Life Story.

"So you never heard tell of Mary Barbour's weddin tombstone?" said grandma in a tone of surprise. "I thought everybody knew about that."

I confessed the most abject ignorance and immediately drew up to the fire. This was partly to gain information and partly because, although the fireplace was wide and deep-throated, and big logs were blazing in it, there were biting draughts of stinging November air coming in at the loosely-fitting door. For grandmother would not be persuaded to leave the home that had been hers for fifty years, and which now showed some signs of decay.

She was knitting vigorously by the firelight, for, although she had all the modern conveniences of heating and lighting, her big fireplace cast its ruddy glow out into the room through all the long winter evenings. I was an angular school-girl of fifteen then, with a great love of the romantic, and was on a four weeks' visit at the old homestead. After knitting a few minutes in silence, she began:

"You've seen the old stone house down on the bank of the river, all shut in with pines and evergreens? It's nigh a hundred years old. When I was born it had been built ten years. When I was a young married woman the Barbours came to live there, and they was proud, high-feelin' people that nobody could get acquainted with. That's what made 'em take it so dretful hard when—but here I am, ahead of my story. You see, Mr. Barbour embezzled or did something of that kind, and went to prison. After he had been there a year he up and hung himself, and that is the last of him as far as my story goes.

"Then his wife and little boy shut themselves up in the stone house and never went outside the gate hardly. She'd had a good deal of schooling, his mother had, and she taught him herself as long as she could, and then he bought books and studied by himself. He tried going to school when he was a small boy, but one of the scholars threw it at him about his father, and Mortimer nearly killed him, and after that his mother kep' him home. And she was a proud woman, was Mis' Barbour, and lofty and severe in her ways. She wouldn't let nobody sympathise with her, which everybody wanted to, as there's so little going on in a place like this.

"Mis' Barbour was real selfish with her grief, so she got herself disliked, besides folks bein' suspicious after the way her husband turned out. What did they live on? Oh, the boy farmed it, and later they do say he wrote books on what they call natural history, though to my mind it was the most unnatural stuff I ever heard tell of—all about beetles and insects with three hundred muscles in their heads, and as could carry twelve hundred times their own weight on their own backs, which everybody knows he must have got up as he went along. They were dreadfully taken up with each other, he and his mother, and she believed everything he said was so, even about the bugs and beetles. But she was his own born mother, and that explains it.

"When she died, Mortimer liked to went crazy. He planted her grave with violets and pansies, and at the head was a white marble monument he had gone to the city for—nothing nearer would suit him. But he didn't display no taste. Nothing on it, my dear, but the old lady's name and the date she died—not an angel, nor a cherub, or a lamb, or a broken rosebud, nor a bit of verse. And yet he always seemed to set store by her.

"Then Mortimer, he just stuck to the old house, same as ever, though now he was alone. I used to wonder how it seemed to him late at night hearin' the swash of the river and the sighing' of them pine trees. He wore his hair long as was the custom in them days, and it was curly up at the ends, like the pictur' of John Wesley. But he had eyes that went right through you and come out the back of your head. And he never set foot into the meeting-house.

"Now, he was the last man in the village I'd ever said would got married. But as sure as you set there,

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when the little milliner, Mary McAllister, came into the place, he was struck. That wasn't nothing strange—all the young fellows was—but, mind you she was struck, too. No, you wouldn't 'a' thought it. Every body warned her, and told her about his father's hangin' himself in prison, and how queer his mother was, and that Mortimer was as odd as Dick's hatband and wouldn't come to no good. She listened, with her eyes big and cool and a little hot patch of red on her cheeks like a daub of paint, but she never said a word. That was Mary McAllister all over, never to say a blessed word, but go and do just as she saw fit. First we knew they was engaged, and it was given out in chapel. Next day her aunt she lived with, came in to see me, and wrung my hands, sayin' she wouldn't be surprised if Mary was murdered before the year was out. What can you think of a man who lives like a hermit, and had a crooked father and a peculiar mother?

"But we wasn't prepared for the worst. A day or two before the wedding, in comes old Mis' Johnson and says—'Shut up the doors tight,' says she, 'and the winders. I've got something to tell you that'll make your hair rise up,' she says, whisperin' like. So I shut the door, she a workin' her hands together like one possessed. 'It's about Mary,' she went on. 'He's been and got a tombstone for her.' 'Who?' asked I, as if I didn't know, but my knees knocked together and I felt a bit sick. 'Mortimer Barbour,' says she. 'My grandson, Jonnie, was after a bird's nest in a tree over in his yard. The limb broke, and down he went right into the roof of the old out-house that hasn't been used for years. It went in under him like tinder, and as soon as he could pick himself up and found no bones broke, what should he see but a new white gravestone, a-settin' up in a corner against some rubbish. He went up to it, and he says as true as the Bible he saw "Mary Barbour" cut on it, and the date she is a-goin' to die.' 'I don't believe it,' says I, but I was all a-faint, and had to go and make us each a cup of tea, so we could bear up under it.

"As soon as I said I didn't believe it Mis' Johnson said we'd go ourselves and see. And we did go, Mortimer bein' away in the fields, and got into the out-house. It was towards dark, and we shook with cold, though it was a warm day in June. We'd brought a bit of candle with us, and Mis' Johnson lit it, and then we saw—land sakes, child, how scairt you look; don't get so near the fire, you'll be all ablaze. Where was I? Oh, we saw the stone, just as Johnnie said, a real gravestone of white marble, and on it the name 'Mary Barbour,' with the date 'Sept. 5, 18—,' below it. But the rest we couldn't make out. 'He's goin' to let her live three months; may Heaven forgive him,' says old Mis' Johnson, meanin' different from what she said.

"The next day I went to Mary, and told her the whole truth. And would you believe it, she said she thought Mis' Johnson and I had no business prying about other people's affairs? 'If he had bought a thousand gravestones I'd have him just the same,' says she. So they was married the next day, but Mary was white as a ghost, and she trembled so she could hardly walk. They went right away, and we threw some old shoes after 'em, but all the wishin' of joy was make-believe, and I never saw a bride with such a white, set face, never looking at her husband nor yet us.

"They were away nearly three months; then they came back to the old house. But folks said they wasn't happy, that she was as cold as a stone, and he was always at his books and old insects. One day I got a letter askin' me to come and see her. She was lyin' down on a lounge when I got there, white and so thin, with big eyes with a sorry, hungry look in 'em. But she had on a smart gown, and was as pretty as a pictur'. As soon as we'd shaken hands and I'd taken off my bonnet and shawl, she says, 'Do you know what day to-morrow is?' Then I thought it up, and said it was the 5th of September. 'The day I am to die,' she says in a soft, quiet way. Then I up and asked her if Mortimer had been ill-treatin' her, but she put up her finger, and said, 'Not a word to my husband; he doesn't know I know it.' Then she said he was awful good to her, but she couldn't get that gravestone out of her head day or night. All at once it came to me how matters was; she'd been too proud to give him up, besides her likin' him, too; and she'd been too proud to tell him about it; and so betwixt the two the poor child was almost beat out. She asked me if I would go out to the out-house with her to see the stone. She wanted to see it and was afraid to go alone.

"Then a queer thing happened. Mortimer had come into the next room while she'd been talkin', and heard every word. I never saw anybody so stirred up as he was when he came in.

"'Is it that tombstone that has stood between us?' he said, and went on to explain that it had been ordered for his mother. He was such a bad writer that the stone-cutter mistook the name Marie for Mary, and after the stone was half done it was found out, and they made him pay for it. So, as it was his, they brought it to him, and, not knowing what to do with it, he just set it up in the out-house and forgot all about it.

"Mary, she began to cry, and then they fell to huggin' and kissin' each other, as if they hadn't met for years. I tried to put a word in to calm 'em, but they saw me without seeing me, and heard me without hearing me, so I put on my bonnet and shawl and came away and left 'em.

"After that? Dear me, they was the happiest couple you ever saw. They used the gravestone for a front doorstep, wrong side up, and it was real pretty. Mary was dretful proud of him, and believed every word he wrote about them bugs and beetles, just as his mother did, which only goes to show the old sayin' is true, that love is blind."

T. Green.

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THE PRINCESS ILSE.

A Romance of Olden Days.

THE last lord of Ilsenburg had been carried to his grave ten years before, and his daughter, Lady Ilse, sat in her great castle, sad and alone.

In obedience to her father she had married a distant cousin, Lord Garbrecht, in order to keep up the old family name; for the house of Ilsenburg was a proud and mighty one.

Princess Ilse's brief wedded life had not been happy; the loveless marriage ended in disappointment and bitterness, yet, when Garbrecht lay on his death-bed he seized her hand wildly, and cried:

"Swear to me that thou wilt wed no other. Swear to be true to me for ever."

And Lady Ilse, being scarce more than a child in years, accustomed to implicit obedience, took the oath.

Three years passed after Lord Garbrecht's death, and still Lady Ilse remained a widow. Though the flower of the land presented themselves as her suitors, none seemed to find favour in her eyes.

When in a particularly dreamy mood, she would have her pony saddled, and ride away from Ilsenburg. The road which she took on these occasions was steep, and a queer-looking net-work of roots spread over it.

A sort of pleasant melancholy always came to Lady Ilse in this rocky solitude. At a certain point she left her horse in the care of the attending squire while she climbed up to a great height. When she had gained her destination she threw herself down under the dusky shade of the firs and beeches, and gazed thoughtfully into the distance. A happy memory then came to her, a smile stole over her face, and she saw herself a child again, and lived again a part of her life.

She had sat upon this very stone. Her lap was filled with wild flowers. Suddenly there appeared before her a boy with dark locks; with flashing eyes, as she looked at him in amazement, he fell at her feet, crying out:

"Oh, sweet Princess Ilse!"

When she passed her hand over his head, she found that his hair had been cut very short; she knew that he was a bondman! in pity she embraced him; and she saw something else—a scarcely-healed scar on his right temple.

"How did you come by that?" she asked sympathetically.

"Herr Dietz von Stollberg wished to test the keenness of his new blade, and struck at me," the boy answered.

Then Princess Ilse wept, and began to call her father, but further than that she could not remember. She had never seen the boy since, had never asked after him.

Thus had the three years of her widowhood passed. The two young counts of Stollberg were her guests. They had long desired a certain piece of forest belonging to Ilsenburg, but Lady Ilse had always been opposed to selling it.

Lady Ilse would rather have remained away from the noise and clatter of her guests and their retainers, but she could not forego her duties as hostess. At times she felt very angry that they had brought a hunchback with them, dressed in the motley costume of the jester, with his stiff red hair standing up like bristles about his painted face; and it angered her more than ever to hear them bandying rough jokes with him at meal-time. Sometimes it seemed to the lady that his eyes were fixed appealingly upon her through the mask he always wore.

One day the younger guest threw a goblet at the hunchback, and cut his head.

Lady Ilse's tender heart was pained; she left the room and went into the courtyard where the hunchback was bathing his wound at the fountain.

"Can I help you?" she asked, in pitying tones.

"I thank you, my lady; but it is a mere surface wound—a scratch."

Lady Ilse stared hard at the man before her. He had removed his mask, and the water had washed the paint from his face, and under the red wig of hair, which was pushed back, she could see the dark, curling rings.

Then she asked him if he did not find Stollberg a hard master, to which he replied that he was no worse than others, and that if the Count would but permit him to go with the horses the jester would not complain.

Lady Ilse glanced swiftly at the hump and asked if he liked horses. The jester replied enthusiastically, whereupon she said he might try hers—they were wild enough for his taste. And she sent him to the keeper of the wardrobe for some less brilliant costume, while she obtained permission from his master for the jester to try her horses.

* * * * *

When Lady Ilse, after leaving Stollberg, went back into the courtyard, she was amazed at the appearance of Ottmar the jester. He had taken off the red wig, but most wonderful of all, with the fool's motley garb had disappeared the hump upon his back. Tall and straight and stately, he stood before his new mistress.

"Is it really you?" she asked almost incredulously. "If it is, you have wonderfully changed."

A smile flittered over his face.

"Bert, the court-fool, was taken ill just as we were about to set out on our journey; so the Court commanded that I should take his place, and as Nature had made me straight instead of crooked, the hump was devised."

At her bidding a servant brought the horses, and they rode away. Ottmar rode wonderfully well, and Lady Ilse admired his clever horsemanship; but, whenever he turned his face away from her, she could see the wound on his temple, and the old childish remembrance came back to her.

Suddenly she said to Ottmar: "We have ridden far enough to-day. To-morrow you shall come again, and, if you wish, you shall remain with me always. How would you like to remain, and have the charge of my stables?"

The strong man threw himself at her feet, and hid his face in her dress, his voice almost choked with sobs.

"Oh, sweet mistress, I will be yours for ever. I will serve you with heart and mind, with body and soul!"

The next day the negotiations were completed. The Princess Ilse gave her forest for Ottmar, and the lords of Stollberg departed, well pleased to have made a good bargain.

While they were riding one day, she induced him to speak of his life with the Stollbergs. He told of the misery he had endured, and she said that henceforth his life should be one of peace and contentment.

But, to her surprise, it did not grow better with

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Ottmar. Every day he looked more sorrowful, every day he grew thinner, and his face looked more haggard. At last the castellan spoke to Lady Ilse about it.

"There is something the matter with Ottmar, but none of us know how to help him."

The princess was deeply grieved, but, feeling that she dare not speak to Ottmar on the subject just now, she kept silent. One morning a maid came running in with the news that Ottmar was lying on the floor of his room unconscious, and that no one could revive him, though they had been trying for some time.

Lady Ilse went as if she had wings.

On the floor lay Ottmar, as pale and still as death. A strange feeling came over Lady Ilse, as her hand touched the scar on his brow. That strange, inexplicable thrill which always passed over her when she looked at the mark was intensified now that she touched it.

Under Lady Ilse's ministrations, more skilful than those of her servants, Ottmar revived at last. With a sigh he slowly opened his eyes, and looked wonderingly at Lady Ilse. She spoke to him soothingly, as one would speak to a weary child.

"You are ill, Ottmar, but I will nurse you well again. You are sad, but I will make you happy. Only you must not dare disobey my orders."

Ottmar shook his head.

"Let me die, my lady; it will be sweet to pass over to that place where all earthly things are at an end. Very sweet."

Lady Ilse contradicted him decidedly.

"It is cowardly to wish to die before your time has come. Besides, you do not know how much grief your death might cause others."

He laughed wildly.

"My death cause grief to others! To whom, I wonder? You could easily get someone else to ride your horses. Besides, my sufferings are unbearable."

"You speak wickedly, Ottmar; I thought that you were happy here with me."

"Only too happy. Every day I see more clearly how worthless I am. Since I have lived this pleasant life in your service, I have found out my true self, found out how full of vain wishes and foolish ambition I am. It is a wild illusion," he said, with great bitterness.

The princess heard him with a bleeding heart.

"What you say may be true," she said; "but have you never thought that your death might leave a gap that could never be filled in someone's life—in mine," very softly she added this. "You do not know, perhaps, what joy it gives me to see you mount the horses; you do not know what pleasure you have brought into my life."

This time Ottmar laughed with real pleasure. Something of Lady Ilse's cheerfulness communicated itself to him.

"Now, as soon as you can come to me, I have a little surprise. Something," she said, with a roguish smile, as she left him, "which I think will not be altogether distasteful to you."

Two days later. The time of violets and elder-blossoms had passed, but the roses were unfolding their petals in the golden sunshine. In obedience to the mistress, a servant had placed a couch in a pleasant spot of the garden for Ottmar, and half led, half carried, him to it.

As he reclined there, drinking in the rose-scented air, a feeling of contentment and peace stole over him; surely life was beautiful and well worth living! Then, like a blight, would come the old black shadow over his pleasant thoughts.

It was madness to allow such wild thoughts as those to pass through his brain. She a princess, he a bondman! That thought tortured him daily. Oh! it was wrong of her to be so kind to him! He hid his face in his hands.

Again he felt the touch of that soft, gentle hand, and this time he knew that it was real. He started up nervously; Lady Ilse stood before him.

"I wanted to see how you stood your first journey."

Ottmar flushed a glowing red; then turned pale as death.

"If I have frightened you, I am very sorry," said the lady.

Ottmar regained his self-possession.

"Pardon me, gracious lady," he said gravely, "that I have seemed lacking in respect, but weak limbs sometimes refuse service," and Ottmar rose slowly and with difficulty.

A sorrowful smile played round her lips. She looked steadily at him.

"Am I so small in your esteem?"

"No, my lady, you are gracious and great, and good and noble, while I am a bondman, the lowest of all mankind, and a miserable wretch not worthy to unfasten your shoe."

His tall figure swayed. Lady Ilse gently pushed him back on the couch.

"Ottmar, you are a self-tormenting fool. I will hear no more of this folly. See! I have brought you something which I think you will like," and she handed him a small roll of parchment, upon which was written in unmistakable characters Ottmar's freedom from the condition of bondage.

Ottmar stared hard at the letters on the written page. He had, while at Stollberg, secretly, and with great trouble, learnt the art of writing from the castle-chaplain; but now these characters seemed to dance before his eyes, and dazzle his sight. Free!

Lady Ilse had expected to witness an outburst of joy; she looked wonderingly at the one at her side, pale and speechless. At last she said, softly:

"Ottmar!"

The sound of her voice seemed to rouse him.

"My lady," he cried, "you have given me the best gift in the world, and I do not know how to use it!"

"Have patience, Ottmar; that will come to you later, when you are fully recovered."

"My lady, the chains have been so long upon me that the links have grown into the flesh; and, though you have filed off my fetters, I shall always bear the signs. I can never hold up my head as one whose shoulders have never felt the yoke of bondage."

Lady Ilse hastily interrupted him:

"Away with these unwholesome fantasies! I tell you again they are the result of your illness. When you are strong, we will consider your future; I will give you a portion of land wherever it shall please you to dwell, and you shall cultivate a freehold, and owe allegiance to no man save the emperor."

There was a strange look in Ottmar's eyes. He sank upon his knees.

"Take back your gift," he begged, holding up the roll of parchment; "let me be your most humble slave rather than send me away from you. I cannot live without you."

Calmly she raised him and made him rest on his couch again, while she seated herself on the stone bench at his side, and began to talk, quietly and naturally.

"What I have written must remain, Ottmar. I will

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invest you with the sword of knightly service, and, if it is not possible for you to be a knight of noble birth, you can be a true and noble knight in all other respects—one whose weapon shall be wielded in my service whenever there is need of a strong arm and a good sword at Ilsenberg."

Ottmar was deeply moved.

"You are so good, so good, gracious princess, that I shall never be able to thank you."

Then she reminded him of that day in their childhood, and, growing more confidential and seeking to cheer him, she told him that that was one of the happy remembrances of her life.

She spoke of her marriage, of her lonely widowhood, of her vow to her dead husband.

"I, too, am a bondman," she said sadly. "I cannot do—as—I would."

The man at her side stood up straight and tall, and looked down at her with a softened expression of protecting tenderness.

"I have been a fool, my lady. You were quite right, but it shall be so no longer. Never more will I hang my head in idle sadness; but with body and soul, heart and mind, I will devote my life to your service, and count myself happy to have been the means of recalling to you one happy remembrance of your childhood."

"That is right," she said, with a look of peace on her face. "Perhaps we shall both find our lives easier to bear in future, and, when you are able to ride so far, we will go together to Inselstein, and celebrate the remembrance of your childhood."

Weeks passed after that conversation. Ottmar wore his knightly armour as if he had never known any other condition of life.

Among all the knights there was none handsomer or more brave than Ottmar, and still they had not made the journey to the Inselstein. Ever since that morning the weather had seemed to set itself against them.

At last, however, they were able to start upon the excursion.

It was a beautiful midsummer morning, and the hearts of both were full to overflowing; perhaps that was why they rode so silently.

When they reached the point where the road began to ascend, Ottmar laid his hand on her bridle.

"Allow me to lead your horse, my lady," he said. "The earth has been washed out here by the heavy rains, making the road rough indeed, and it will weary you to have to draw so tight a rein."

She gave him her bridle; not that she needed his care, for my lady was a famous equestrienne, but, in some way that she could not explain, the sense of protection was pleasant. When they were upon level ground again, he did not give the bridle back.

The road narrowed suddenly, so that the princess and Ottmar were obliged to ride single file. Ottmar soon dismounted, and tied his horse to a tree. Princess Ilse followed his example.

"Let us walk the remainder of the way. It is only a short distance to Inselstein."

Side by side they went through the solitary green aisles of the forest.

Again words seemed to fail them. The twisted, moss-grown root of a great tree spread over their path in every direction, looking like a huge green snake. Ottmar sprang over it, and offered his hand to Lady Ilse. She gratefully accepted the proffered assistance, and did not relinquish her grasp. With hands closely clasped, Ottmar and the princess walked through the forest as happy as two children, as oblivious as if they were in a dream of enchantment.

Thus at last they reached the Inselstein. Lady Ilse sat down contentedly.

"This is the place," she said, but Ottmar threw himself at her feet, crying out:

"Oh, sweet Princess Ilse!"

Lady Ilse shrank back, terrified at the passionate outburst of feeling.

"Ottmar, be quiet," she said; "for my sake be quiet. You know that I cannot help you. You know as well as I that I am bound by an oath. I pray you, therefore, be calm." He wiped the tears from his eyes.

"I implore your pardon, my lady; I am grieved that I have frightened you. For your sake I will control my sorrow; but you must have a wreath, just as you had that day. I will gather the flowers." He hastened away towards the dangerous descent, where the beautiful mountain-blossoms grew. From this place the view on the right and left stretched far into the distance; but in front it was shut in by the Inselstein, which rose abruptly from the valley like a great watch-tower. At the foot of the Inselstein are the famous Ilsen Falls.

Lady Ilse knew that Ottmar was going upon a dangerous errand. She tried to recall him, but it was too late.

"Come back! Come back!" she cried, but the only answer was a mocking echo of her own words. In anguish Lady Ilse cowered upon the edge of the precipice. There she saw Ottmar clinging to a projecting root. He had gone a step too far; a misstep, a sudden loosening of the root, and—she grew faint to think of it! In dumb agony she prayed.

Ottmar's face was radiant. In his right hand he carried a great bunch of spring blossoms which he held up to her, smiling brightly, and saying:

"My dear lady——"

Suddenly, without a moment's warning, the root, unable to stand the heavy weight upon it, gave way, and without a sound, like the vanishing of a disembodied spirit, Ottmar sank into the depths below.

Lady Ilse looked upon him as one stunned by a heavy blow. Then, as if suddenly stung into action, she flew down a little hunter's path in the valley below. She had not known of this path before; she never knew how she got down into the valley. She no longer hoped to save him; she thought now only of seeing him once more—of catching his last glance.

In a few moments she reached the fallen man. He lay in a great lump of ferns. His upturned face was deadly pale, the moist earth pitifully absorbed the blood which oozed from the wound in the head.

Lady Ilse seized one of the limp-hanging hands, which still held the blossoms; they were cold. Trembling with fear, she bent over him. In agony she cried:

"Ottmar! Ottmar!"

He opened his eyes, and looked at her as if, with the intentness of his glance, he would hold her fast for ever.

"Farewell, my dear lady," he whispered softly.

She threw herself upon her knees beside him. "Death shall not separate us. Death has absolved my oath. You will never kiss me, Ottmar, but I will kiss you once—now while you can know it. Oh! Ottmar, my only love."

So, with Princess Ilse's kiss upon his lips, Ottmar passed peacefully over the dark river.

Lady Ilse lived for a long time in her castle, with her retinue of soldiers and servants; but no one of all those who knew her ever saw her smile again.

T. H. Jonmal.

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My 100 Marks.

THE incident I am about to relate occurred in Hamburg some years back.

I was a subaltern in the 35th Hussars at the time, and had been to Berlin on a visit to a cousin attached to the Embassy. Having a friend in Hamburg I broke my return journey to spend a few days in the old Hanseatic city.

I reached Hamburg from the Prussian capital about noon, and immediately drove to a quiet hotel in the Dammthor Strasse. After lunch I called on my friend, a wealthy grain-merchant, who lived in the best part of the town not far from where I had put up. We had a chat, and then accepting with pleasure an invitation to dine with him that same evening, I bade him good-bye for the time being, and returned to my hotel to write some letters.

I had just finished them and gone up to my room to dress, when a waiter knocked at my door, and, with a Continental disregard for ceremony, ushered a man in.

My visitor, whom I was not unnaturally inclined to look upon more in the light of an intruder than a caller, was a typical middle-class German, except that he was very slightly built, and his face was pale and emaciated.

He remained silent until the waiter had left, and then asked in broken English, with a bow:

"Is it *der Herr Capitain*——?" I informed him I was that person, in German, in which language he put his second question.

"May I lock the door so that we are not disturbed, sir?"

"When I know your name and business I shall be in a better position to consider your request," I answered, wondering what on earth the fellow wanted.

First glancing nervously behind him, he came close to me and, talking fast in Low German, which I had difficulty in following, he made a long, rambling statement that, however, so far interested me as to hold my attention.

What the man told me might be true or false, probability pointed to the latter, but in either case it was a startling story. To be brief, it was to the following effect:

He and another had deserted from the navy on account of some financial affair.

His companion then declared he had discovered a means of getting hold of the war-office plans of Kiel harbour, and had induced my informer to assist in the theft by protesting that they could easily get out of the country and would make their fortunes by the sale of the documents.

They successfully accomplished the first and all-important step in their nefarious scheme, but the instigator of the affair had then tried to leave his accomplice to pay the piper by getting away without him. My informant had, however, discovered and frustrated this part of the scoundrel's programme; himself obtaining possession of the papers, and allowing his fellow-thief to abscond with dummies—if he could—but he had been already arrested, and they were now on the track of the second deserter.

When he had finished and I had questioned him on two or three points I did not understand, he turned round and then looked from me to the door. I nodded. Noiselessly turning the key, he quickly unbuttoned his coat and waistcoat, and taking a package done up in black linen from an inner pocket, held it towards me.

"They are yours, sir, for a hundred marks. A steamer leaves for London to-night, and if I can get a passage by her I am safe, but I am penniless," he said in a gruff whisper.

Whatever atom of belief I might have had in his tale vanished when he made this proposition. It was too suggestive of the ordinary swindler. However, thinking the yarn, if it proved to be nothing else, cheap at the price, I took five twenty mark notes out of my pocket and handed them to him in exchange for his papers. The fellow's face beamed, he made no attempt to hide his delight, but grasping the money he said the single word "Thanks," unfastened the door and rushed out. As I heard him taking the stairs three steps at a time I instantly regretted my bargain, but if I did not want to keep my friend waiting I must hurry, so I placed the package unopened in my trunk and proceeded to change my clothes.

After an enjoyable evening with the grain merchant, for my friend was an excellent host, I started to return to my hotel on foot.

About half-past eleven I found myself in the principal thoroughfare, the Neuerwall, where I turned into one of the big cafés to smoke a final cigar. The place was crowded with people from the Opera and the different concert halls in the vicinity, and I had difficulty in finding a seat. I eventually made for a vacant chair at a table adjoining one where a party of officers were seated. I gave my order, and amused myself watching the various types around me.

Seeing a cover containing a copy of the English *Graphic* in front of me, I picked it up, and was looking

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through the paper, when an officer stalked up to the table behind me and spoke to one of the party. They were talking quickly in a subdued tone, and I did not pay any attention to them until the two words frequently repeated caught my ear, "Kiel-plans." This aroused my curiosity. I listened. Yes, their discussion evidently had some connection with my acquisition which I had nearly forgotten till this moment. I heard no more, for the two officers left the café together, but I had learnt enough. My visitor had after all, then been neither swindler nor madman. I did not wait to consider the matter further; but, paying the waiter, walked out and at once returned to the hotel.

The drowsy porter mechanically lit and handed me a candle and I hurried upstairs. Once inside my room I stood the candlestick on the dressing-table, and first locking the door, opened my trunk in search of the black linen package. But I turned the contents upside down in vain, for the thing I sought had vanished as completely as if it had never been there. I turned to examine my other impedimenta, but it was nowhere to be found. It was evident that it had been stolen, but how, was a mystery, for the look of the trunk was uninjured. While I was puzzling my sleepy brains with this conundrum, someone rapped at the door, I opened it and found the porter outside with a note. It was left early in the evening, he explained, but he had overlooked it when I came in.

Taking the letter, I re-fastened the door. The envelope contained only a sheet of ordinary foreign note-paper ruled in squares. The communication had neither date nor signature. It consisted of the following words written in a small copper-plate hand:

"Lieutenant Matthew is warned against making any inquiries respecting a theft that may have occurred in his room this evening. He will find on examination that none of his property has been touched."

The letter lies before me as I write; it is all I have to show for my hundred marks.

It is never any use crying over spilt milk, but I sometimes wonder what would have been the result if I had instantly left for England with the documents. I have heard, however, that the German police system is far reaching.

GEOFFREY RHODES.

BOAT RACE COMPETITION.

ON Saturday, March 25th, the Oxford v Cambridge Boat Race will take place. There is every reason to believe that the contest will be an exciting one, and so that our readers may take additional interest in the National event we offer a Prize of £5 to the sender of the coupon, printed below, giving most nearly correct: (1) The Winning Boat; (2) the distance separating the two boats at the finish; (3) the time taken by the winning boat in the race. The third condition will only be used to decide the actual winner of the prize in the event of more than one giving equally correct answers to the other two questions. Prizes divided in the event of a tie between competitors. The Judges' decision of the race will be our standard for making the award.

Having filled up the coupon to your thinking, sign your name and address in the space provided on the left, and get two friends to sign their names and addresses on the right. In the event of your winning the prize they will each receive £1. Competitors may send in any number of attempts, all of which may be signed by the same witnesses.

Up to the present time fifty-five races have been rowed. Oxford have won thirty-two and Cambridge twenty-two races, the 1877 contest being a dead heat. Oxford have won the races for the past nine years, their times being from a minimum of 18min. 47sec. to a maximum of 22min. 15sec., and their wins during that time from half-a-length to thirteen lengths.

All envelopes containing coupons should be addressed: "BOAT RACE COMPETITION," *Short Stories*, Henrietta Street, London, W.C., and should reach us not later than the first post, Friday, March 24th. Any envelopes bearing a later postmark than March 23rd will be disqualified.

The Competition is run in conjunction with *PASTIMES*.

"SHORT STORIES" BOAT RACE COMPETITION COUPON.

TIME OF WINNING BOAT:

Winning Boat: ..... Min. / Sec.

Distance Won by: .....

Competitor: .....

Witnesses: .....

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THE TIMMINS TROUBLES.

XV.—DIFFICULTIES OF A WITNESS.

"You must get up pretty early in the morning, my dear," said Mr. Timmins, "because I'm going to be a witness in court."

"Good gracious!" ejaculated Mrs. Timmins; "what have you been doing?"

"What d'ye s'pose I've been doing? I've heard some things in a law case, and I've got to swear to them. You can't have a law case without witnesses, and I've got to be one to-morrow; so you bustle up in the morning and get my breakfast."

"They can't do anything to you, can they?" inquired Mrs. Timmins nervously.

"If I'm not there in time they can send me to gaol," responded Mr. Timmins ominously, "and you'd better get me ready in time if you don't want to lose me;" and Mr. Timmins flopped into bed and went to sleep.

Mrs. Timmins turned the clock ahead two hours, and sat down to speculate on the chances of waking up at the proper moment. At first she determined to stay up all night, but she began to get sleepy, and, reflecting that if she fixed her mind on the hour she wanted to rise she'd be sure to wake up, she went to bed and to sleep simultaneously.

At half-past four she awoke with a terrible start.

"Wake up, my dear!" she exclaimed to her husband. "You've got to go a-witnessing in a case this morning. Hurry up, or they'll put you in gaol."

"Wah!" rejoined Mr. Timmins. "What did the deed get mixed there with—proof—ah!" and Mr. Timmins was sound asleep again.

"You must get up and go to court," said Mrs. Timmins, nudging him firmly. "You know something about a law case, and you must wake up."

"What's the matter?" propounded Mr. Timmins, sitting up and glaring round him. "What day of the month is this? I haven't slept a wink," and Mr. Timmins fell back on his pillow.

"You know you must go to the case," continued Mrs. Timmins. "You've been appointed a witness, and you must go and swear about it. Wake up, or they will arrest you."

"What case?" demanded Mr. Timmins. "Who's arrested? Can't you let a man alone just as he is getting in a doze? What's the matter with you?"

"You wanted to get up early about some court. Come, get up, now, or they'll send you to gaol," and Mrs. Timmins got up and lighted the gas.

"Who's going to court?" asked Mr. Timmins sitting up in bed. "Where is the court? D'yer think any court wants me at five o'clock in the morning?"

"It's about a law case," said Mrs. Timmins cheerfully. "You know you are a witness. To think that I should live to be the wife of a witness!" said Mrs. Timmins, firmly impressed that it was something in the nature of a foreign mission, gazing admiringly upon her husband.

"Hang the law case!" howled Mr. Timmins, now thoroughly riled. "D'ye think a law case goes prowling round all night like a policeman? Have you got an idea that a judge is going to strap the court-house on his back, and fetch it up here in the dead of night to try a law case?"

"But you said you wanted to get up early," resumed Mrs. Timmins, "and it's pretty early now."

"D'ye s'pose I wanted to get up at midnight? P'rhaps you were afraid if I didn't start early I wouldn't get a seat. The court doesn't meet till ten o'clock, and here you wake me up at four! What do you suppose a witness is, anyhow?" shouted Mr. Timmins, getting wilder and wilder. "D'ye know what a court is?"

"Why, yes," said Mrs. Timmins. "A court is where they hang people. Mrs. Meirhoff——"

"That's it! You've got it!" sputtered Mr. Timmins. "With that information, all you want is a wig and an adjournment to be a lawyer. If I had your intelligence and a bald head I'd hire out for a job at board wages. I tell ye a court is where they try cases about lands and licking people, and—and—and divorce cases. Yes, indeed," continued Mr. Timmins solemnly, "they try divorce cases about women waking their husbands up in the dead of night."

"What kind of law case are you going to witness?" inquired Mrs. Timmins.

"A daylight case! You understand that? At ten o'clock, and not five. Get that into your head. Think you can remember ten o'clock? If you can't, can you remember eleven or noon?"

"Do they have cases every hour?" queried Mrs. Timmins.

"Of course they do. They leave every fifteen minutes, like a Saturday train, and if I can't catch one case, I'll witness in another. Got it now? Only they don't run so often from midnight to six. Do you begin to see into it?"

"I think I do," said Mrs. Timmins ruminating. "I was thinking that if one started about three o'clock I'd go and witness with you."

"Oh! you'd make a witness!" proclaimed Mr. Timmins. "With your capacity for observation and ability to recollect, you'd only want to appear twice to absorb the whole witness business," and with this reflection Mr. Timmins went back to his slumbers.

At ten o'clock sharp his wife called him and notified him of the hour.

"How'm I going to get there in time? Why didn't you call me before? D'you want me sent to prison for contempt? You want to get rid of me, don't you?" and Mr. Timmins darted into his clothes.

"Don't you want some breakfast, my dear?" inquired Mrs. Timmins tenderly.

"No, I don't want any breakfast!" he shouted. "Didn't I tell ye I was a witness at ten, and now it's half-past? D'you think a man is appointed a witness during good behaviour? S'pose I hold the office till my successor is appointed?" and Mr. Timmins plunged downstairs and out of the house.

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BOOK V.—CONCERNING A SOJOURN - - AMONGST THE DAJIANS.

CONCERNING THE RULE OF KING ALEXANDER.

CHAPTER I.

How Sandy Carmichael stirred up the Ermans: how he led them to victory: how the Dajian canoes went away: and how the Ermans did homage to their King Alexander.

To retrace our steps a little.

The last we saw of Sandy Carmichael was in the chief sorcerer's cave. When his two unfortunate companions awoke to find themselves in Dajian clutches, they noticed that Sandy was not in sight, and hoped that by some means or other he had managed to escape; though to what device he owed his safety, they were unable to discover.

The facts of the matter, which are simple, may be briefly stated thus. Sandy was awakened from his sleep by the groanings of the fat little assistant sorcerer. He was desperately tired still, but his medical instinct prevailed, and he got up to inspect his patient. The poor fellow's wound was much inflamed, and he was suffering agonies from it. A fresh cool compress would be the only way of alleviating the pain in any appreciable degree; and so Sandy went away down to the woodland to gather material for this, and also to find the wherewith to make some sharp cooling drink which would slacken the fierce thirst which the fever had engendered.

Suitable leaves for the compress came to his hand without much trouble; but, luckily for him, the suitable herbs, from which to decoct the beverage he wished to administer internally, were not to be seen anywhere.

He wandered on through the leafy aisles, searching on every side without the smallest success. A less determined character would have resigned the task in despair; but although Sandy was indebted to the little assistant sorcerer for nothing whatever—had indeed a grudge against him if he chose to remember it—still his medical instincts had bidden him attempt the cure, and his spirit of perseverance refused to let him neglect any item which would forward it.

So Sandy Carmichael strode along, dodging under the lianes, and sweeping the trailing orchids aside from his path, scanning each side in turn for the plants he wanted, and at last had his doggedness rewarded by the sight of a tidy clump of the long-wished-for herb.

He gathered a sufficiency, and then turning, began smartly to retrace his steps.

The next stage of the story will be anticipated, and therefore need not be told in detail.

Emerging from the wood, he saw that Ebry had turned traitor, and that both his European comrades were in the hands of Dajians.

To rescue them single-handed was impossible. To stay where he was meant sharing their fate. So he slipped back to cover till the cortége had passed by, and then, returning into the open once more, he set off with all the speed he could muster towards the point where he believed King Oleron's head-quarters would be.

His idea of the locality were somewhat vague, and as the crest-fallen monarch was keeping up no particular state, it was impossible to tell when he was getting into his neighbourhood. So, much time was spent in profitless search. But at last he came across his majesty seated under the shade of a scarlet-flowered hibiscus bush, making a meal from a calabash of sweet potatoes.

In as few words as possible Sandy told him what had happened, dwelling strongly on the point that the capture was already some hours old, and that not another instant of time ought to be lost.

The old king looked at him sorrowfully, hopelessly.

"What can I do?" he moaned. "These two and you were the mainstay of our battle. Even with all of you, my people were broken, dispirited, cowed. And now that two are gone, what can they do? Nothing. My power over them is waning. They think me old, feeble, useless. They forget all that I have done for them during long years past, in a few short days of ill success."

"Will you call the men together?" Sandy demanded.

"To what end?" asked the King. "That I may again expose myself to their murmurings and revilings?"

"No. To give me an opportunity of goading them into a sense of their duty to themselves."

The answer was a bold one, but the old King, reading in Sandy Carmichael's set face that self-confidence that was lacking in himself, agreed to his request. His men were all within a short radius, encamped without order, hidden about through the forest without organisation. Messengers were sent amongst them, and they obeyed the summons, more out of curiosity than obedience. Word had gone round that it was the youngest of the three white men who had instigated the gathering.

They came trooping up from their forest retreats like so many rabbits coming out on a quiet moonlight night, and assembled in a small open glade. No order or formation was attempted. The only thing uniform was the faces, and they were all sullen and scowling.

It was rather an ordeal for a youngster to address such an assembly, and Sandy Carmichael was a bit nervous at first;

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but he warmed up as he spoke of the defence of the Ledge, grew more excited when he told how part of the relieving party was captured through the despicable treachery of the chief sorcerer, and burst into real eloquence when he called on all present to fall upon the besiegers, and rescue their countrymen and his. He mentioned nothing about a possible repulse. He spoke of victory as a foregone conclusion, and he took it for granted that all were ready for the enterprise.

The mob of men were stirred by his harangue, and old Maantee gave first voice to the answer. The others, fired by enthusiasm, declared that they would fight to the last gasp.

Sandy had studied the character of these people he had to deal with. They were fickle, changeable, easily influenced. Ten minutes ago they had quite intended to refuse thrusting themselves into danger; now they were keen for it; and if their ardour were allowed but a little time to cool, they would soon become as timorous as ever again.

So he struck while the iron was hot, and placed himself at their head.

The force sped down Maantee's valley at a rapid pace, and the two bodies of Dajians who were investing the Ledge saw them coming. The invaders drew together for mutual support, and coming incautiously within range of Mytto's artillery were treated to a sharp fire which bowled over half-a-dozen of them.

They drew off out of shot in a big hurry, every man running for all he was worth, and massed themselves in a disorderly squad. The Ermans were actually coming to attack them unprovoked! The timid Ermans, who looked on from the mountain when their homes were destroyed in the valleys below, and so seldom attempted reprisals! There was no nervousness about them now. They were coming on as bold as brass, and the Dajians did not like the look of matters at all.

Being unimpeded by any scientific formation, the foremost men kept edging away to the rear, and those who they left to bear the brunt of the attack, were not slow to follow the example set them in their turn. So that when the Ermans, encouraged by these signs of demoralisation, did come into actual collision with their enemy, the latter were already in pretty rapid retreat. In fact, the momentum of the whole, at the second of impact, was entirely in one direction.

The result was obvious.

The Dajians ran, and the Ermans, for once in their lives brimful of fight, followed at their heels, and did a considerable amount of damage.

But the inhabitants of the island could not be persuaded to press their advantage thoroughly home. The retreating foe had not suffered its rear to be harassed impassively, and several doughty Ermans bit the turf in their valiant attempts to slay their former persecutors. So that when the Dajians having reached the coast, and being unable to move further with any degree of comfort till the canoes were launched, made a decided stand, Sandy could not move his forces, either by precept or example, to compel the invaders to do so against their will.

So, contenting himself with hurrying up the embarkation, as much as his unwilling resources would permit of, he waited till all that were in a condition to get there were out of harm's way on the lagoon; and then, leaving a body of men under Maantee to resist any attempt at another landing, he went off with Mytto and the rest southward down the coast to the next valley.

He had hoped to find his white comrades prisoners in the hands of the men who were besieging the Ledge, but gathering now that there was another band beyond him, he moved towards it with all the pace he could muster. As it happened the two prisoners were there, but, as we have seen, he was too late to rescue them. The messenger who carried the news of defeat was before him, and the canoes were in the water before he could get near enough to bring their crews into action.

So there was nothing for it but to turn round again, and rejoin his main body.

As they marched back along the coast, they saw all the canoes of the enemy putting off and making for the entrances of the reef. There was no doubt of it that the invaders had taken themselves off *en masse*, and Sandy felt that all chance of succouring his two old comrades had vanished. True they might be killed already; but even if they had escaped so far, he felt sure that they were doomed all the same. About their fate in cannibal Daji there could be no doubt. He felt himself powerless to attempt their rescue there.

Very sick at heart, poor Sandy sat down on a tussock of sea grass, and watched the retreating craft passing out through the openings of the reef into the broad ocean beyond. They were bearing with them the only ties that bound him to the hemisphere of his birth; two true comrades whom he had—so he told himself—failed in the hour of their need.

He almost envied their lot. Henceforward what had he to look for? Taking advantage of the mood of the islanders, he had rendered them a service that day. He had made them feel that they were men once more, and had led them in a battle which drove the invader from their soil. But then they were fickle—savagely fickle. Oleron had lost his authority of years, simply through the defeats of a few weeks. Though, come to think of it, that was greatly King Oleron's own fault for not having trained his subjects to arms in time of peace. But notwithstanding that, the Ermans were an ungrateful race, Sandy told himself, and his lot amongst them would be an unenviable one. His medical skill might avail something, but if a patient died under his hand, he might well be murdered there and then.

He was musing on in this bitter strain, when a huge band of clamouring natives approached him with the chief Maantee, and Mytto his son at their head.

Their rejoicings were natural enough, Sandy thought; and though he too was glad for their sake that the Dajians were gone and the island was their own again, he had no heart to join in any outburst of barbaric thanksgiving. So he got up, and turned to plunge into the bushes, hoping to find a place where he could pour out his grief in solitude; but he was stopped before he had taken a single stride.

With one mighty cry, the vast assembly uttered his name.

He turned again and faced them. With the exception of the chiefs, all sank down on the ground, and pressed their heads on the sand. The chiefs advanced. Maantee was bearing a scarlet-tappa robe—the only piece of scarlet cloth on Erma—the insignia of royalty.

"Oleron is dead," the chief said. "He died as a king should; fighting the enemies of his island. So it devolved upon the whole people to elect a successor to him. All spoke, yet there was but a single voice. They cried for him who had driven the Dajians to their canoes. 'None other,' said all, 'shall reign over us.' Being the oldest of his chiefs, the honour devolves upon me to invest our new king with his kingly robe.

"Ermans, see! The king is clad with his scarlet. Long may he wear it. Highly may he honour it. Save the king!"

"Save the king!" shouted the people of Erma, and they bowed their heads once more in token of homage and allegiance.

And so began the reign of King Alexander.

CHAPTER II.

How Sneyd and O'Neill vowed allegiance to King Alexander: how Norah was made Mrs. O'Neill: how a plan was schemed for the defence of the island: and how the same was carried into effect.

Sneyd and O'Neill were lying in a couple of grass hammocks under the verandah of King Alexander's palace. They were both very much sun-darkened, and had both lost some flesh, but otherwise they were little the worse for their late rough experiences. The nervous strain had bee-

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great at the time; but once relieved, they were disposed to forget it in the comforts of the present.

"That's a great cloak entoirely," O'Neill was saying as he examined the scarlet robe of royalty with quizzical glance. "Ye'll be dispensing wid breeches now, I suppose, afther the fashion adopted by all yer loyal subjects?"

King Alexander turned with a comical look of despair to Sneyd. "Do make that miserable man let me have a little peace," he implored. "He's done nothing but chaff me about my new accoutrements ever since he came back."

"'Uneasy lies the man who wears the scarlet robe,' your poor old predecessor used to say, Sandy, in that sentenious way of his. By the way, don't you think it would be more dignified if you made the Ermans lengthen out your name to Alexander?"

"They've always heard you call me Sandy, and so they call me Sandy too."

"They do do that same," chuckled the Irishman, "an' wid as much aisy familiarity as though ye was own brother to aich of them. Yer honour should kape up more state. Start a coach-an'-six; drop pipes an' take to cigars; never lave the house widout a smart burnished block-tin crown perched jauntily at the side of yer sconce; an' always march at the tail of a brass band."

"The idea is distinctly good," said Sneyd, "only unfortunately the resources of the kingdom are limited. We might indeed contrive to build the coach, but I'm afraid we should have to fall back on his majesty's loyal subjects for motive power. We'll order a crown of best silver-gilt the next time we send to Birmingham, of course, but in the meantime I'm afraid his majesty will have to content himself with the mid section a big cocoanut, set round with oyster shells. That may not be quite in accordance with western orthodoxy, but it will be neat and not gaudy; and, if I may put it so, barbarically appropriate. Brazen instruments too are unfortunately lacking, but O'Neill has a musical ear, and I am sure that if he was made Bandmaster-General, he would get together an orchestra of tom-toms and conch-shells that would beat any combination in Europe—as regards volume of sound, at any rate."

"Thanks for the suggestions," replied the king. "I'll think 'em over."

"Might I venture to inquire," his other tormentor went on, "av yer honour has thought of bucklin' on a royal consort? There's hapes o' likely girls about the island that only want to be winked at, to wink back again. Sure there isn't an unmarried woman about the place that wouldn't be proud of throwin' sheep's eyes at a handsome young man like yerself. Faith, king dear, wid that sproutin' beard ye're just irresistible. Ye should think about marryin'."

"I have thought about it," rejoined King Alexander.

"Well?"

"And have decided to go no further than thinking just at present," continued his majesty. "I'm going to wait and see how your venture turns out first, O'Neill, before I make up my mind to follow your example. But," he continued, with graceful compliment, "I'm afraid even that won't make me reconciled to marriage. If there were another Norah on the island, I might try to win her; but there isn't, and there's not likely to be."

"Sandy," exclaimed the Irishman, "you're as good-hearted a bhoy as ever stepped, an' it's meself that's sorry for tazin yez. Norah is what ye say. She's not one in ten thousand; she's one in ten generations."

So his majesty earned a little rest, and the conversation for a while lost its personal tinge; but the opportunity for banter was too good to be resisted, and in less than ten minutes the pair of them were chaffing him as hard as ever again.

The had started talking about the house—the royal palace; I beg its pardon—and Sandy—bother! I mean his majesty the King—had remarked, "Oleron's shanty was burnt to the ground, so I built this."

"Had it built, you mane," suggested O'Neill.

"Had it built, then, if that pleases you better. I didn't want to brag. But all the same, I did most of the work myself."

The Irishman held up his hands in mock horror.

"Just hear yez that now! A king, a rale live king, and actually buildin' his own palace wid his own royal fists! Was iver the like done before?"

"I'm afraid," said Sneyd, "he's doing but small credit to our careful bringing up. As one of your majesty's early preceptors, I crave leave to say that I am shocked."

"Look here, you two," exclaimed the goaded monarch, "I'm going to appoint a new public official—a court executioner. And then I'll have you both hanged."

"Just as an example to ourselves," retorted the irrepressible Irishman, "so that we shall learn better manners for the future."

"Let us be serious for a minute. You know the islanders made me their chief ruler in a moment of enthusiasm. Perhaps I had stirred them up to save themselves, but my wish was more for your welfare than for theirs. In that last battle, Oleron fell fighting. He had left no son. A successor was needed. Failing any one else, they pitched upon me, being moved to that course by an access of momentary gratitude. Even then I was not fitted for the position. Now that you have returned, I feel my inefficiency even more acutely. You are both my seniors, and you both have more worldly knowledge than I upon almost every point. So I shall resign in favour of one or other of you, and——"

"Hould on a minute," interrupted O'Neill. "I flatly decline to enter a thrade I'm in no manner of way fitted for. Me forefathers was kings somewhere or other in Ulster. But that's a great long time ago now, an' the knack of rulin' has passed clane out of the family."

"And I too," said Sneyd, "most distinctly refuse to rob you of your well-earned honours. They've got the right man in the right place. Had we been on the ground, they'd have chosen you, Sandy, just the same. You're the youngest, certainly; but you've got the best headpiece of the lot of us, and you've mastered the ways of these islanders most thoroughly. That's a talent that's born in one, and not learnt afterwards. O'Neill and I might strive as much as we liked, and still never acquire it. You are the king, and long may you reign. We two will aid you by every means in our power. We are both entirely at your service. But you may rest quite assured that we shall never either seek or consent to supplant you."

Sandy tried to express his thanks for this generous behaviour, but neither of them would hear another word. This was rather rude, perhaps, and hardly the sort of behaviour a sovereign ought to expect from a pair of subjects who had so recently expressed their complete allegiance to him; but the case was a peculiar one, and so must be judged from it own standpoint.

* * * * *

Two days after this interview a wedding took place, which made Norah, daughter of Maantee, into Mrs. Murtagh O'Neill. The ceremony was a peculiar one, and will perhaps bear a brief description.

Early in the morning bride and bridegroom took to the woods unattended, and played at a game of conventional hide-and-seek. By this I mean that the one did not go out of her way to find an undiscoverable retreat, and the other did not distress himself with arduous search. In fact, to put it more plainly, each chose a pleasant secluded spot and sat down and waited patiently. The day wore through, darkness fell and a full moon rose rich and red above the waving tree tops. Then the two arose, and the bridegroom found his bride by pre-arranged accident (if such a term may be used) in a little glade, surrounded and partly overarched by sweet-smelling orange trees. He seized her in his arms, and announced his capture with a glad shout.

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From their hiding-places behind the orchid-hung walls of the inclosure, the bidden guests burst forth; the women garlanded with wreaths of orange-blossom, and having live yellow-glowing fire-flies fastened in their hair; the men in their gala attire of bright-coloured *tappa* cloth. They all clustered round the happy couple, laughing and singing and each bearing some present. The women presented their offerings to the bridegroom, the men gave theirs to the bride; and by accepting the gifts, the two formally acknowledged themselves to be man and wife.

A feast followed, composed of fruit and palm wine, and then there was a dance of the unmarried girls, whose lithe forms, flitting here and there in the soft moonlight, gave one the idea of so many fairies disporting themselves in their own domain, for the spot was one of surpassing loveliness, and the heavily-scented air seemed as though it could only belong to the realm of fairyland.

The dance concluded, the assembled guests escorted the newly-married pair to the threshold of their bungalow, and there left them.

The ceremony was a simple one, but according to Erman custom it was binding, and either of the couple who deserted the other would be viewed as a pariah by all the islanders, whatever might be the reason alleged for the act.

* * * * *

It was not very long after this that Sneyd and O'Neill were sitting in King Alexander's palace, discussing with that youthful monarch the various items of his future policy. Though nominally autocratic, he had tactfully formed them into a sort of privy council, and usually gave way if their united opinion went against his own. And in truth they were as good a couple of advisers as he could have procured. O'Neill, despite his love of fun, his fondness for quips and jokes, and his queer knack of making a bull even of the simplest sentence, was shrewd and keensighted, and generally knew the feelings of the natives on any point, through the medium of his wife. Besides, although thoroughly illiterate, he had been a rolling stone almost all his life, and had contrived to pick up a vast and varied amount of information which was more or less useful. Sneyd was more staid by nature, and generally thought out his opinions before he uttered them. He had received a good preliminary education from a private tutor, and at Cambridge; and since the day when he joined the Prince's army near Manchester, he had had a good many other things instilled into him which the pedantic dominies of his earlier days being ignorant of themselves, had omitted to teach.

So that, although the two were quite ordinary men, Sandy might very well have been saddled with a worse couple.

They were discussing, as I have said, on this special day a question of future policy. They were trying to hit upon the best means of preventing a recurrence of those scenes which had devastated the island but a few short months before; how, in fact, to render themselves safe from foreign invasion in the future. Sneyd was in favour of a standing army, or a periodically trained militia that could be placed on a war-footing at a very short notice. It would be difficult to raise this, as professional soldiering was in none of the Erman traditions; but the ex-cornet held that his scheme was a feasible one, and offered himself to drill every male in the island capable of carrying arms. O'Neill pinned his faith on an efficient navy. With a fleet of properly-built canoes under his command, manned with properly-trained crews, he would guarantee to deter any hostile flotilla from landing on the shores of Erma; and with the sea as a battle-field they would suffer far less than they would by letting an enemy land, and operating against him on dry ground.

Both held stoutly to their theories, and the three argued each out in turn, threshing out thoroughly every point that could be brought to bear, *pro* or *con*. At last when disfavour had been conclusively shown for both schemes, Sneyd said:

"Look here, Sandy, suppose we learn your idea on the subject. I'm beginning to have a notion that you've got the whole thing planned out in your head long enough ago, and you only just wanted to hear what we had got to say on the subject, merely to show you were a lot cleverer than either of us."

Sandy's face relaxed into one of its rare smiles. "I'm not so conceited as that," he said, "but I will confess to having a plan. It embraces both of yours, but is, I think, simpler than either."

"Well, that's modest, at any rate," laughed O'Neill. "Come, out with it."

"Don't be in too great a hurry. I want you to come with me on the lagoon." He whistled, and a man appeared. "Tell off a canoe's crew to meet us down at the beach, Trono."

The man departed on his errand, and they sauntered leisurely down to the shore. When they got there they found the canoe had been run down, and was lying alongside a natural jetty of coral. They stepped on board, the craft was shoved off, and the paddles dipped in perfect unison, shooting her swiftly over the placid surface of the sea lake.

Down through the clear water beneath them were coral plants of every hue and shape imaginable, with the lovely topical sea-herbage sprouting up between them. But to the wonders and beauties of this marine garden, no one in the canoe paid any attention. The paddlers had been born and had lived all their lives within reach of them, and so viewed their forms and colours with unappreciative eye. And the three Europeans had something else wherewith to occupy their attention. They were looking at the barrier reef, black, grim, and forbidding, deluged every half minute with a shrieking avalanche of creamy foam.

"That," Sandy said, "is what I take to be our chief bulwark. There has not been built a craft in the two hemispheres which could be sent across that barrier, and still be able to float on this hither side."

"But," suggested Sneyd, seeing that he waited for comment, "there are openings through the reef where a clever boatman can take his vessel through safely enough, if he bides his time and waits for the right moment."

"I know it. There are three openings; one on the other side of the island and two here. We are heading to one of them now. There is beside it, if you'll notice, a small low-lying islet. It's just above the level of the lagoon, and so close to the reef that its surface is always sown with spume flakes. Now my proposition is to build a strong fort on this of squared blocks cemented together with mortar, and arm it with something the same sort of artillery as that we used on the Ledge, only of course our engines being constructed at leisure, could be far from perfect. That would command this entrance, and any small craft which tried to pass through against our will would most infallibly be sunk. And as for the other two openings in the reef, I should raft off stones and try to block them so that the coral insects have a chance to work. They will soon close the breach if only the direct sweep of the sea is stopped for awhile."

"Be the powers," exclaimed the Irishman, "it's the right pig's ear we've got hold of this time. An' the other two schemes are worked into boot, for there'll be soldiers wanted to man the fort, an' sailors to man a small fleet who'll kape up the shore connection."

"And what's another thing," added Sneyd, "a very small force will suffice to keep the whole island in safety, when once the defences are made. If every man in the community does a fortnight's service in the year, that is all that will be required of him. Sandy, I congratulate you. You've got an older head on your shoulders than your years would warrant. By the way, how old are you? We ought to know, as they'll be wanting the precise figure one of them fine days for the Gotha Almanac."

"I don't know my exact age. But I should think I was about sixteen or seventeen when you found me in Duncan

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Carmichael's little cutter. We have gone through a good deal since that."

"We have, but sticking to the point at issue, how long were you with Duncan Carmichael?"

"Twelve years, I think; or was it thirteen? I forget exactly. There was so little to help recollect how time passed."

"And before then—do you recollect nothing? We have never had the subject up before, which is an odd thing, considering how long we've been together."

"Yes," replied Sandy meditatively; "I do remember a home somewhere—a small house, with a man who must have been my father. I don't recollect anybody who could have been my mother; but there was an old woman who used to look after me, called Bridget. She had no teeth, and her nose nearly touched her chin. My father was a thin little man, who always seemed worried about something or other. One day Bridget told me we were going away. She dressed me, and we journeyed some distance by coach; stayed the night at a strange house; and then journeyed on again to a big town. We slept another night there, and went on board a ship which sailed early next morning. From what I've learnt afterwards she was a big merchantman. She called at Belfast Lough for more passengers, and then headed round the north of Ireland. The officer in command must have been drunk, for he blundered her on to Innistrahul* just after dusk. There was a heavy sea running, and the vessel began to go to pieces immediately. Duncan Carmichael, who was in the Sound, saw the wreckage next morning, and set to work gleaning what he could do. Amongst other things he came across me. I was lashed to a hen-coop, and was pretty nearly dead with exposure. However, I suppose he thought I should be of some use to him, and so took the trouble to wrap me up, and stow me down in the forepeak. He left me ashore when he got back, but after a couple of years he took me to sea again, and I was kept with the cutter till you came."

"That's a pretty baldish tale," said Sneyd. "Can't you remember any more about your people than that?"

"I've tried many and many a time of late, but nothing more will come back to me. I know it is very incomplete. If I were back in the world again, it would be hopeless to attempt a search for any of my relatives who might be alive. So you see that with regard to kith and kin over there, I have made up my mind that I must always be without. But for that, I don't think I should be resigned to staying here; but as it is, I shall be quite content to end my days on Erma."

* * * * *

The work of making the reef into a natural line of defence was put in hand without further delay. It appeared a somewhat colossal undertaking, and though it did turn out to be large, still many and willing hands made the work light. The islanders were so thoroughly stirred to the necessity of avoiding another invasion, if the means lay in their power, that they gave their labour willingly to the public cause. Great masses of coral rock were rafted out and dropped in the two doomed openings. The ravenous sea swept away load after load, but the supply never faltered, and in time the channels were completely obstructed.

Meanwhile other blocks had been ferried across to the islet, where they were built into shape, and cemented with a mortar made from burnt coral† mixed with sand and water.

The fort was a plain square building, with walls twenty feet high rising sheer out of the water. There was one small doorway in the middle of the land side; and adequately defended and provisioned, it was absolutely impregnable to native attack. The place was of immense strength, for the walls were ten feet thick, and they were further supported by a platform which stretched across four feet from the top, and rested upon heavy groined arches below. Two spiral stairways led to this, and on it were placed ballistars, catapults, and mammoth bows, which, although they looked grotesque enough when lying idle, would be sufficiently terrible when they were bent with deadly intent in time of war. The chamber below, which was lighted by lance windows, would serve as an ample barrack for forty men, or more in case of need, and, in fact, the whole was as complete as could be wished for.

The question of military service presented no difficulty. So eager were the islanders to retrieve their former error, that the whole male population volunteered in a body, and the fortnight's spell of guard duty was accounted the highest reward a man could receive.

The erection of these defences took up a considerable period of time, and in the meanwhile improvements were going on ashore. No radical changes were effected. No drastic measures were used to eliminate old faults. But little by little the islanders were induced to adopt useful innovations, and to discard their old crude, ineffectual, and often unhealthy makeshifts.

King Alexander spared no pains for the amelioration of his subjects' condition, and his two European counsellors nobly seconded his majesty's efforts.

BOOK VI.

CONCERNING ANOTHER VOYAGE.

How the brig Eliza Williams *rescued two starving men from a canoe out at sea: how these two men were pressed on board H.B.M.S.* Serpent, *and met an old acquaintance in her captain: and how Sandy Carmichael, alias King Alexander, proved to be Henry Weldon Vivian Esquire.*

"Hand 'em down below, poor beggars; and, doctor, you do what you can. Mr. Thomas, swing the mainyard, and let's be moving again. We've missed well nigh an hour of this fair breeze as it is. Not that I grudge it. No grub, open boat, and wide ocean, is a mixture that calls for any sailor's sympathies. But it's no use wasting more time now we've got 'em snugly aboard. Wonder where they came from? The canoe was a dug-out, the bo's'n said. Blown off some island probably. However, it's no use guessing. They'll come-to, I suppose, with grub and drink and nursing, and then if they haven't forgotten their mother tongues, I suppose they can talk to us."

And Captain Body, of the brig *Eliza Williams*, replaced his long brass-bound telescope in its beckets within the companion, and resumed his walk along the weather quarter-deck, which had been interrupted an hour before by the look-out's cry of "Men waving from a small boat broad on the lee bow."

What had happened, the reader has probably guessed already. Captain Body's surmise was the correct one. The two men—they were our acquaintances, Lawrence Sneyd, and Murtagh O'Neill—had gone outside the reefs for an afternoon's fishing. It had come on to blow, and unable to make headway against the wind, they were compelled to let their frail craft drift before it. They had gone through a good deal of suffering, and had finally been sighted and picked up by the brig. Very weak, and pretty well unconscious from exhaustion when hauled on board, they dozed and slept for the greater part of two days; and on the third, when they came on deck again, they found that the brig had been spanking along a southerly course before a fair wind. It would have been useless to ask her skipper to beat up again

* Many wrecks have occurred here, some of them of historical note. The rock lies off the coast between Lough Swilly and Lough Foyle, and has caused at one time or another an immense loss of life. It is now marked with a light which revolves every half-minute, and throws a ray forty miles on a clear night.

† Coral is a carbonate of calcium, and when roasted yields calcium oxide (quicklime) just as do the older mineral limestones. When water is added, the hydrate, commonly called "slack lime," is formed.

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for the island, and so they forebore to court a certain refusal by doing so.

Captain Body heard their tale with great interest, and at its conclusion said, "Well, I'm sorry we haven't got your shipmate — what's his name — Carmichael, for I daresay he'd be glad enough to throw up his kingly honours if he got the chance. However it's out of the question to 'bout ship and hunt him up even if you could spot your island on the chart, which you can't with any degree of accuracy. But it strikes me that you two fellows are rather in luck's way. You didn't think so when you were starving in that canoe, but I expect you're a bit glad now at not having the prospect of leaving your bones amongst savages always before you."

"There are savages and savages," said Sneyd, "and I've come across far worse people to live amongst than the Ermans. However, although everything was very comfortable, and it is quite possible to fare worse elsewhere, I wasn't quite reconciled to spending the rest of my days on the island."

"And you, O'Neill?" asked Body, "aren't you much of the same mind?"

"I can't say I am, Captain. In fact, very much the reverse. Yez see, it's me wife I'm thinking about."

"Pooh! my good fellow. A very lucky escape for you. A nigger woman's no proper mate for a white man."

"See here, Captain Body," said the Irishman, standing up and looking very black, "if there's anybody aboard this brig that's going to sneer at Norah—at me wife, that is—you'd better clap me in irons straight away to keep me fingers out of mischief. For as sure as death, there'll be murther done av I hear any more of it. She's the thruest, pluckiest, lovinest darlint from here to Chaney an' back again t'other way; an' as for her hide bein' black, 'tisn't as dark as me own, nor yours either, for the matter of that. So there's the matter put squarely."

"Come, come, O'Neill," said Body, "I didn't mean to offend you. 'Pon my word, I didn't. Besides, I was mistaken. I thought the lady was as black as the bottom of a kettle."

"An' av she was," growled the Irishman, "that wouldn't make any difference. It's her heart I love her for, not her hide."

"Well, well," said the captain, nettled at the way O'Neill took his overture, "we'll say no more about it. I'll put you ashore the first time I can, and you may swim back, or fly back if you want to. Or if you like, I'll give you a passage round to Port Royal. Gentlemen, I wish you both good morning."

"You've put the skipper's back up," remarked Sneyd when Body had gone below.

"Then he should kape a civil tongue in his head about my poor darlint. Losin' her's bad enough, but to hear every brass-bound sea pedlar that plases, sneer at her because she's not the colour of his own tallow-faced womenkind at home, just sets me in the humour that men are when they hit a thwack at any one, an' mane to hurt 'em."

The *Eliza Williams* ran round the Horn, and up the South American Coast to the West India Islands, making a good fast passage of it all the way. The two passengers had a fair enough time of it on the whole, for they were fed and clothed, had a snug bunk, and the society of the officers and of one another; but Body never forgave O'Neill's vigorous defence of Norah; and as he made himself stiff and unpleasant henceforward, as only a ship's autocrat can, they determined to quit the brig at Jamaica and not trespass on his hospitality any longer.

They certainly did quit her, and in a manner they were hardly prepared for.

Hardly was the anchor down in Port Royal mud, than a boat put off from one of the British men-of-war lying in the harbour, and pulled quickly alongside. An officer sprang on board, and after a few preliminary questions called for volunteers for His Majesty's service. There was no response, so getting part of his boat's crew on deck to back him up in case of a row, he proceeded, according to the manner of the day, to "press" any men who struck his fancy. The whole crew was mustered and made to toe a line. Sneyd and O'Neill had to join the parade. The king's officer spotted them out first of all—mighty compliment—and bade them go down into the boat. Body, to do him justice, tried hard to get them released. But the lieutenant was obdurate. He was sorry, extremely sorry. And he was quite willing to admit that the case was a hard one: the hardest, in fact, that had ever come to his ears. But His Majesty was in desperate need of men, and two such sturdy-looking fellows as these were not to be passed over at any price. If they showed ability they might get on the quarter-deck. But be that as it might, he was determined on one point. H. B. M. S. *Serpent* was going to have their services, so into the boat they were trundled.

Six other unfortunates scrambled down the brig's sides dunnage in hand; and then the lieutenant and his men followed, and the boat pulled away to the *Serpent*

The pressed men were mustered on the quarter-deck, and the lieutenant dived below to tell the captain of his haul.

In five minutes or so, the captain came on deck. He was a short, slim, accurately dressed little man, in silk stockings, knee-breeches, snow-white kerseymere waistcoat with long flaps reaching over the hips, laced cut-away coat with heavy bullion epaulets, and a gold-laced cocked hat. His shoe-buckles sparkled with brilliants, and the long ruffles which fell over his hands were of Valenciennes lace.

At the sight of this nautical dandy, our two friends started with surprise: at the sound of his voice, clear, quiet, and precise, they exchanged a glance and nodded. It was their old commander in the *Fortune's Favourite*, Reuben Grum, who stood before them.

The recognition was not mutual. In the two brown-bearded men, attired in oddments selected from the pursers store of a small brig, the captain of the *Serpent* did not recognise two officers who had served under him before he held His Britannic Majesty's commission. But when their names were called out he stared at them curiously, and asked where they were from last.

"That is a long story, Captain Grum," said Sneyd "but some nine years ago I sailed into these waters for the first time in the snow *Fortune's Favourite* of Bristol."

"Ha, I thought I had seen you both before. I won't impress you into the service. Just stand on one side for the present, till I have gone through these other men, and then I'll come and talk to you. I may have some news that you will find interesting. And, by the way, my name is Vivian —Captain Charles Vivian."

They waited for a few minutes whilst the pressed men were being persuaded to "volunteer" (which they all did so as to receive the bounty money), and then they went below into the captain's cabin. His steward brought in wine and glasses, and when they were alone the little man asked what they had been doing all those long years. "Gauntlett reported," he said "that you two, and that promising young Carmichael, had gone away after ambergris in the jolly-boat, and got separated from the schooner in a black squall. Indeed, so positive was he that you were lost that he did not even run back after the weather had cleared to look for you."

Sneyd gave a brief account of their adventures, and when he had concluded, the captain said, "Then you must let me offer you a passage back to England. I shall get my sailing orders to-morrow or the next day, so you won't run a chance of getting your adventures capped by a spell of the yellow fever which is raging ashore just now. And, moreover, there's a tremendous lot of prize money for you both to finger. I had the making up of the schooner's books as well as the snow's, and entered you both as

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'missing,' so that if you did turn up again, you could be defrauded of nothing. Interest will have accrued, and I must congratulate each of you on having a small fortune to come into. That haul at Callao was a lucky one. By the way, I suppose you don't know, but the place was levelled by an earthquake soon after you left."

After expressing their thanks for the various kindnesses done to them, Sneyd inquired why their entertainer had changed his name.

The little captain laughed.

"I was a young man of fashion in London once," he said, "and spent a good deal more money than I ought to have done. A crisis came. I saw two alternatives before me—to go to prison or the sea. I chose the latter, picked the ugliest name that came readily into my head—to wit, Reuben Grum, and, as you know, worked my way up to being skipper of a privateer. That brought me in money; but as the war showed every prospect of continuing, I aspired to something else besides, so I managed to get a lieutenancy by payment and interest in the King's service. After a hard-fought action, which was a lucky one for me, I was obliged to give myself an acting commandership, and worked my own vessel home with a prize of almost double her size in consort. Their Lordships at the Admiralty were pleased to confirm the commission, and shortly afterwards they still further honoured me by a promotion to post-rank. That, gentlemen, is, with the exception of one incident which is of a purely personal nature, the sum total of my history."

The expected orders came on the following day, and the anchor was hove short as soon as the boat which brought them was seen to leave the admiral's ship. The frigate was standing out of the harbour under full sail twenty minutes afterwards, all hands overjoyed to be homeward bound.

The officers were a very agreeable lot—the lieutenant who had pressed him being, so Sneyd thought, one of the nicest fellows he ever met—and the homeward voyage was a most pleasant one.

Their adventures on Erma and Daji formed a never-ending topic of conversation, Captain Vivian, in particular, being deeply interested in them. "Fancy that young fellow Carmichael being a king," he would say. "I always thought he was cut out for something beyond the ordinary run, and that if the chance did not come to him to rise, he'd just turn to and make the chance. But King of the Cannibals! I never dreamt he would aspire to that."

The little man was never tired of hearing about Sandy's exploits, and extolling the forethought or cleverness which prompted each one of them; and if Sneyd and O'Neill had not been thoroughly fond of their old shipmate and fellow-exile, they could not but have been over jealous of the praise that was so unstintingly showered down on him.

This seemed to dawn upon Captain Vivian one day, and he said. "You mustn't mind my thinking so much about the lad. The truth is, he reminded me, both in fact and manner, of some one who is dead. Of course, though, the resemblance is merely fancied, for the person of whom I speak was not called Carmichael."

"Sandy's name is not Carmichael either, for the matter of that," Sneyd remarked. "He was picked up at sea, and rechristened by the man who got hold of him."

"Picked up at sea?—you interest me, Sneyd. Do you know where?"

"Off the north coast of Ireland, somewhere. Let me see, what was the name of the place? Innis—something, but I've forgotten what."

"'Twas Innistrahul," said O'Neill.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Vivian. "You don't mean that?"

"I most certainly do," replied Sneyd, with a look of surprise at the captain's violent agitation. "I remember now, Innistrahul was the name of the place."

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"And did he tell you nothing else?"

Sneyd mentioned the few trifling details of the wreck which had been imparted to him, and then repeated the brief sketch Sandy had given of his early life.

"Bridget was the nurse's name?" inquired Vivian.

"Yes. She was an old woman, he said, with a nutcracker nose and chin."

"And the man, the father, how did he describe him?"

"As being in figure very much like yourself."

"Great heavens, Sneyd, I was his father! Listen. I told you the other day that there was a personal incident left out in the history I gave you. It was this. I married when a very young man. My wife and I were devoted to one another for a year. Then a child was born—a boy—at the cost of her life. He was nursed by my wife's old nurse, Bridget. Difficulties pressed upon me, and I determined to start life afresh in America. With Bridget and the child I went on board a barque, the *Chesapeake*, at Liverpool. She called at Belfast Lough, passed out through the North Channel, and was blundered by her drunken skipper on to an outlier of Innistrahul. The vessel was an old one, and began to break up the moment we struck. Thinking to save my child, I lashed him to a coop, and jumped overboard with him. The first sea dashed the coop from my grasp. I never saw it again. The wind influenced its course and drove it away from the rocks. Being lower in the water, the tide sent me ashore bruised, half-drowned, but still alive. When I was afloat, none of the crowd on the rocks would touch me—they think it brings ill-luck to finger a drowning man—but once I had crawled up high and dry they were kind enough.

"I got well and found myself, as I thought, alone in the world—without ties and without kindred. Besides this I was penniless. And so I got down to Belfast and shipped before the mast. The rest is as I've told you.

"And so your Sandy Carmichael, your King Alexander, is Henry Weldon Vivian."

This was news with a vengeance, and they discussed it over and over till far into the night. Captain Vivian was fully determined his son should at least have the opportunity of returning to England, which Sneyd was positive he would accept now that he had kindred to welcome him. O'Neill wanted to be with Norah, either in Erma or Ireland. And Sneyd was willing to do most things to serve the two companions of his exile; but he was naturally anxious to get back and see his own people first.

So it was finally decided that a vessel was to be chartered (or bought) of sufficient size to sail to the island. Sneyd promised to join her after he had enjoyed three months ashore, by which time Murtagh O'Neill said he would have her stored, fitted, armed, and ready for sea; and Captain Vivian declared that if their Lordships at the Admiralty could not give him extended leave, he would throw up his commission and quit the service.

And to cut a long yarn short, matters turned out to suit them all. The war came to an end, and a smart topsail schooner worked her way round into the South Seas, and after much trouble found the island of Erma, and ran past the white fort into the lagoon. Sandy was only too glad of the chance of returning to England with his father if only he could resign his kingship into fitting hands, and as O'Neill had determined to stay in the island, that difficulty was soon solved for him. The Irishman assumed the sceptre, with Norah for his queen, and Sneyd and the Vivians, promising to communicate with them if ever a chance occurred, passed out again through the barrier reef, and headed once more towards their home waters in the distant east.

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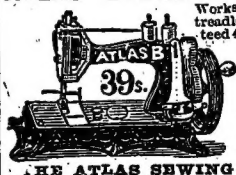

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Your Esteemed Inquiry Duly to Hand.

O. C.—What may be described as the best-lighted piece of sea or ocean highway is that known as "The Downs," where light is needed to warn ships of the Goodwin Sands that stretch from Dover to Ramsgate at a distance of five miles from the mainland. There are four lightships for that short extent of ocean highway.

P. T.—In almost all languages you will find the word "sack" with practically the same meaning—that is, a bag of greater or less proportions. The spelling differs slightly, according to the usage of the language—as *sac* in French—but it is the same word.

H. A. C.—It is one of the rules of the Honourable Artillery Company of Boston that each officer, at the end of his term of command, which lasts a year, shall return to the ranks as a private. Thus it happens that there is generally in the ranks of this regiment about a dozen gentlemen who have at some time had full control of it and show themselves still willing to obey.

H.—The ancient city of Troy was on a hill. On this hill were found, in successive layers, the remains of four cities, all of which had evidently been destroyed by fire.

H. F. L.—Frank Uncles has made 2,000 consecutive jumps with a skipping-rope, without a miss, in 14min. 30sec., at Auburn, N.Y., in 1881.

B.—The Baron Lyndhurst who was Lord Chancellor during the period 1827-30 was born in America. His father was an artist, and was living in Boston when the War of Independence began; he decided to remain a British subject at the conclusion of the struggle, and came to London with his wife and the future Keeper of the King's Conscience.

F.—"Canary colour" usually indicates a bright yellow. But the bird that may be called the real canary—that from the Canary Islands—is of a greenish yellow.

Lesser.—Directly a Chinaman's household gets up in the morning crackers are exploded under the doorways to drive away any evil spirits which may have collected there during the night. The hubbub which this occasions baffles all description, and it is a long time before new arrivals in Shanghai become accustomed to it.

I. M. M. T.—At the annual fair at Wat Saraphm, Siam, there is a game, in which an expert swimmer gets into a pond, and pretends to be a "ngenak" or merman. The people stand round and try to catch him when he comes to the top of the water.

Bookworm.—Twenty-four new books, on an average, are published in Great Britain every day.

L. B.—Oysters that have been taken from the sea know as if by instinct the time when the tide is coming in, and open their shells to receive their food from the waters.

J. M.—Yes; at Sikhalin, off the east coast of Siberia, the conditions you mention may be observed. Instead of the high places bring cold and those near the sea-level being warmest, the reverse is the case. On the coast, the vegetation is of an Arctic character; on the heights, the plants grow with tropical luxuriance. This is due to the action of the wind and to the sea currents.

G. K.—The shark has no bones; a cartilaginous material forms an efficient substitute.

H. L.—A Russian bride is not submitted to the trying ordeal of appearing in white satin and lace in cold, broad daylight. The wedding takes place by candle light in the drawing-room.

L. G.—In the Swiss Parliament the three national languages—French, German and Italian—are allowed, but the last-named is used much less often than the others. You may hear a speech in French followed by one in German and another in Italian. If the president be a German Swiss, his remarks are immediately repeated in French by an official at his side; and in the reverse case the remarks are repeated in German. The laws and resolutions are published in all three tongues.

D. H.—In Yuentab, Central America, all the girls of a family are dressed precisely alike, even to the tying of a bow, or the flower in the hair.

Spark.—According to a German electrician, the electric spark is not so simple as it appears. It is preceded by several brush or fan-like discharges from each pole, each successive discharge extending further outwards until the gap is bridged and the spark passes. He believes that a similar phenomenon precedes lightning.

T.—Yes, the deer really weeps, its eyes being provided with lachrymal glands.

Q.—The Queen's Speech was first transmitted by telegraph in November, 1847, when the rate of transmission was fifty-five letters a minute. Even in 1871 it was considered a great feat to transmit ninety-one words per minute. Four hundred is now a common speed.

Summer.—A Spanish author has written five novels of unique description. The first is without the letter A, the second without E, the third without I, the fourth without O, and the fifth without U

Vera.—People who sleep with their mouths shut live the longest.

R. C.—On certain days the Hindoos regard gambling as a religious duty.

3rd Tower Hamlets.—Nearly every corps in the German Army has a chiropodist in its ranks.

A. C.—Five hundred trading vessels leave the Thames daily for all parts of the world.

D. S. B.—About one half of the population of Jerusalem are Jews, and the remainder Moslems and Christians, the former being in the majority.

King Dick.—When the world's population exceeds 5,994,000,000, the earth will be unable to find nourishment for her people, and they will be forced either to cannibalism or starvation. This figure will be reached in about 280 years.

Laura.—Of the entire human race it is estimated that 500,000,000 are well clothed—that is, they wear garments of some kind; 250 000,000 habitually go naked; 700,000,000 cover only parts of their body; 500,000,000 live in houses; 700,000,000 in huts and caves; and 250,000,000 have virtually no shelter at all.

Goethe.—There is a small stream in Syria, formed by the water from several springs, which contains a large number of fishes all having strange eyes. Some have one eye protruding and the other sunken; in others, the two eyes protrude but are of different sizes; others, again, have a normal eye and a rudimentary one. They form the oddest collection of fish it is possible to find, but the cause of this peculiarity remains a mystery.

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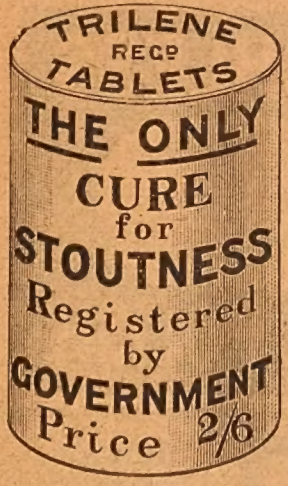

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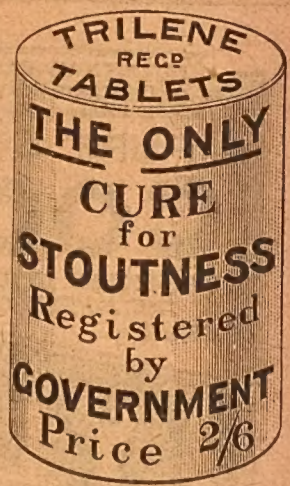

SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

"87 Alexandra Road, Norwich, October 19th, 1896.

"Gentlemen,—In reference to Trilene Tablets, I may say that my wife found the greatest possible benefit from the use of them; their action was rapid, and exceeded our utmost expectations, as they were also most beneficial to the respiratory organs. My wife was many years growing so stout, but although the disease was, I consider chronic, the Tablets soon reduced the same completely. You have our united thanks, and if I can do anything to promote your interests I will freely use my utmost endeavours to do so.

"Yours faithfully, J. R. CANHAM."

MRS. DARNLEY SMITH, Landscove Vicarage, Ashburton, writes: "Trilene Tablets have reduced my weight very much. I am so much lighter in every way, and better in health."

COUNTESS SECKENDORFF, of Berlin, writes: "The Tablets greatly benefited me personally, and I am recommending them to friends."

MISS CHATTERTON, 7 Salisbury Villas, Banstead, Surrey, says: "I weighed 12st. 8lb., but am now 11st. and getting much better."

Nurse CROUCHER, at Mrs. Bennett's, 14 Buckleigh Road, Streatham, says: "I lost 9lb. from the box I took."

"77 Hindhill Street, Heywood, February 5th, 1898.

"Gentlemen,—I have not quite finished the box of Tablets and am 21lb. lighter. The change is great, and several friends are beginning the treatment, which not only reduces fat but strengthens rheumatic joints—such has been the case with me. "Yours sincerely, M. A. HEYWOOD."

MRS. D. BURTON, of Silverleigh, Tunbridge, writes: "I am very pleased with difference in size, my friends all telling me how much thinner I am getting."

MISS NORTHLEDGE, The Laurels, Rischolme Road, Lincoln, says: "The Tablets reduced me 1st., so that I am cured."

West Cornforth, Ferryhill.

MR. WM. USHER says: "A sister of mine, who was 17st., was greatly reduced by your Tablets to 15st."

Extract from *The Lady*, September 3rd, 1896: "Many stout persons have suffered untold agonies in unavailing efforts to reduce their bulk, either by means of severe dieting, or by taking more or less deleterious drugs; but all these pains would have been saved if they had only invested in a box of the wonderful Trilene Tablets which are quite harmless, containing neither mercury, arsenic, nor any other mineral poison, and which are an unfailing cure for obesity."

FATHER T. M. BYRNE, of Holy Cross Abbey, Sligo, writes: "When I began your Tablets I was 12st. 5lb.; I now scale at 10st. 11lb.—my case, too, is hereditary."

MRS. T. BOSTON, Cambridge Villas, Clifford Street, South Wigston, says: "I congratulate you on your wonderful Tablets. My weight at first starting them was 11st. 7lb., and I now weigh 9st. 11lb."

MR. MCLEOD, 44, Calside, Paisley, writes: "I have been cured. If you want to know my weight now, it is 10st.; reduced 1st. 8lb., and I am quite content."

A. M. PRATT, of Ongar House, Ongar, says: "My weight is so much reduced it is unnecessary to take more. The reduction of weight was from 12st. 6lb. to 10st. 4lb."

MRS. WHITEHOUSE, of Poplar Avenue, Edgbaston, writes: "My husband is in splendid health, and has lost 15lb. in weight since taking the Tablets; I am sure I thank you on his account."

MRS. H. COX, 28 Watnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The box of Tablets has reduced my weight 1½ stones."

MR. WALKER, 236 London Road, Hazelgrove, Stockport, says: "I have used one box and am 14lb. lighter. Send another soon as possible."

Col.-Sergt. WHITTLE, of East Lancashire Regt., Burnley, Lancs, says: "A man in our regiment in 1891 lost several stone from taking your Tablets."

Mr. BUTLER, Surgeon, M.R.C.V.S., of Hampton Manor, Evesham, says: "My patient has lost 1st. in weight whilst taking your Tablets."

MRS E. ALEXANDER, 102 Dixon Street, New Swindon, says: "They have reduced me quite 2 stone, and I am now quite cured."

Mrs. W. A. RADFORD, of High Street, New Brinsley, Eastwood, writes: "Before taking Tablets I was 46 inches round waist, now I am 32 inches. I hope soon to be 23. I could hardly move or get up, now I get about easily. Please use this as you wish."

Countess G. FURSTENBERG, of Stammheim, Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well."

The Princess LIECHTENSTEIN writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send me your excellent Tablets."

Mrs. WEAVER, of Greenpits Villa, Ross, Hereford, writes: "I am reduced from 13st. 8lb. to 11st. You may use this if you like."

MRS. CROSSLEY, of Rose Hill, Torver, nr, Coniston, says: "There is a very decided diminution of fat. I am delighted, and cannot speak too highly in praise of Tablets. My heart is better, and I can breathe so much easier. You may refer to me as often as you like."

Lady C. CONRAD writes from Wiesbaden: "I am very pleased with your Tablets."

Mrs. TAYLOR-ROBINSON, of Tweed Green House, Whalley Range, Manchester, says: "I feel so much lighter and better since taking your Tablets, and am so much thinner that I hardly recognise myself."

Miss A. LONG, of 9 South Parade, Waterford, writes: "Your Tablets have reduced me 14lb."

Miss A. DAWSON, 62 Orchard Street, Weston-super-Mare, says: "Glad to say the Tablets have sufficiently reduced me. I shall always recommend them."

THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, 66 FINSBURY PAVEMENT, LONDON.

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"Ivy" Soap
IT FLOATS!

PRICE 3D. PER LARGE DOUBLE TABLET

ITS REMARKABLE PROPERTY OF FLOATING ON WATER PREVENTS THE ANNOYANCE OF LOSING THE SOAP, AS IT IS ALWAYS IN SIGHT—READY WHEN WANTED.
TO BE HAD OF ALL GROCERS, STORES, ETC.
IF ANY DIFFICULTY, THREE CAKES WILL BE SENT CARRIAGE PAID, ON RECEIPT OF ADDRESS & TWELVE STAMPS OR ONE SHILLING POSTAL ORDER. BY
SOLE MAKER GOODWINS'
371, Ordsall Lane, Manchester.

NUTRITIOUS, EASILY DIGESTED, OF DELICIOUS FLAVOUR & AROMA.
PURE SOLUBLE
COCOA
GUARANTEED TO BE THE PRODUCT OF THE FINEST COCOA BEANS.
LYLE'S
GOLDEN SYRUP.
LONGEST ESTABLISHED PUREST & BEST.

"MATCHLESS"
FREE FROM ACID, POISON OR GRIT.
"WARNING TO LADIES."
Beware of Polishes that set up injurious acids. They impregnate your cloths with verdigris and spoil your hands.
"SIMPLE TE T."
Dab a small quantity on a penny and leave it overnight. If it sets up acid the surface will become green with verdigris.
"MATCHLESS" METAL POLISH will not turn any metal green, and is therefore free from acid.
LARGEST SALE IN THE WORLD
METAL POLISH.
PATON, CALVERT & Co MANUFACTURERS LIVERPOOL

RED WHITE AND BLUE
SOLD EVERYWHERE
FRENCH COFFEE
DELICIOUS FOR BREAKFAST OR AFTER DINNER.

IT IS NOT
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PARIS BLUE
UNLESS RECKITT'S NAME IS ON THE WRAPPER.

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